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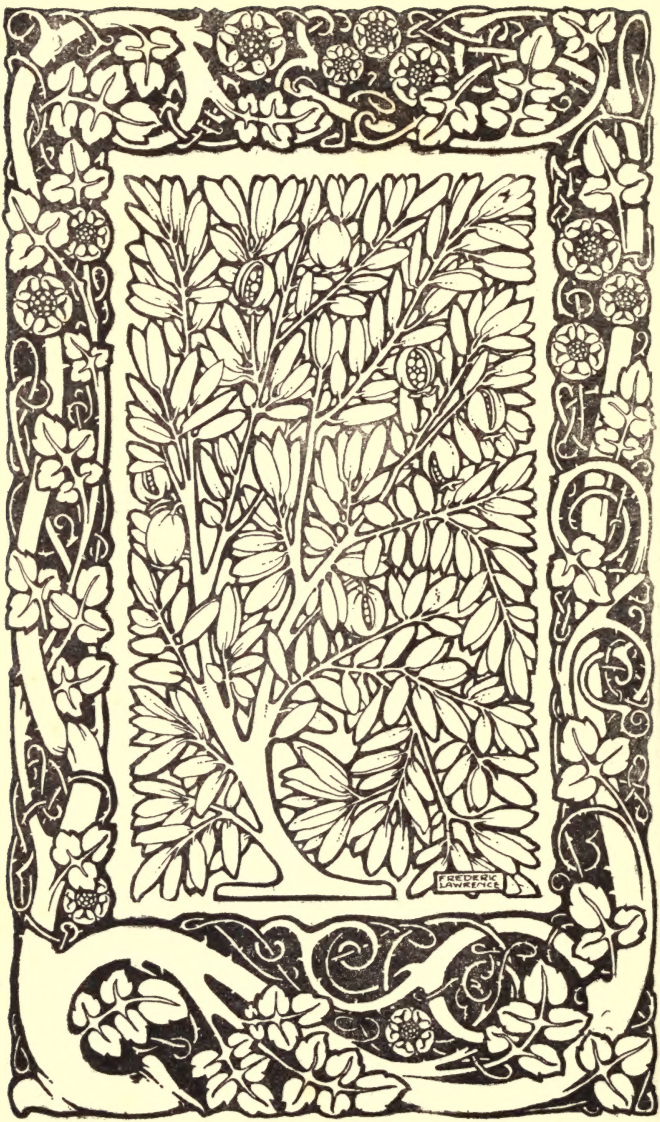
# THE MEDIAEVAL REVIVAL

ARTHUR RUDMAN

MANUALS FOR CHRISTIAN THINKERS.


FREDERIC
LAWRENCE

# THE MEDIAEVAL REVIVAL

BY

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EACH epoch receives new lights from Him who is called the Sun of Righteousness and Truth. I desire only that these lights be penetrated by a flame as ardent as that which animated the fathers of our Churches. The great servants of God, who have departed from us, are as Elijahs borne away in a chariot of fire. Let us gather up, not their shroud—representing their portion of human errors and infirmities, of which we must beware of making dead traditions—but their mantle, that which symbolizes their generous and fruitful activity. This is the only way for the Elishas to perpetuate the Elijahs.

E. DE PRESSENSÉ

(*Pref. to 'John Wesley,' par M. Lelièvre*).

# INTRODUCTION

THIS brief sketch of mediaeval religious history is confined within the *period* commencing with the late twelfth and closing with the early fifteenth centuries, an era troubled indeed by schisms and heresies within the Roman pale, but remote and alien from the spirit of Luther and the temper of the Reformation. The age is furrowed by the traces of innovating thought and insurgent act, but no cleaving gulf has yet opened to separate the Western Church into hostile camps. It is significant of this epoch that, touched and stirred as it was by many phases and forms of revolt, — Patarine, Catharite, Waldensian, Hussite,—the historic phrase, 'the great schism of the West,' refers to none of these, but to the struggle of Pope and antipope, anathematizing each other 'like two dogs snarling over a bone.' This domestic strife of the Church seemed at the time, to many of her own children, a more perilous and ominous fact than the discord and dissolution threatened by these stirrings of nascent revolt. It is (with few exceptions) only by

**Period**

licence of language that the leaders of the mediaeval revival can be termed 'reformers before the Reformation' and 'Protestants before Luther.' They lived and laboured—to use the language of their day—to cleanse the seamless robe of Christ from its many foul stains, but to rend it asunder was not in their dreams or desires. If one may utter a modest caveat where it would be easier to confess a debt, it is in this direction that even writers as attractive and instructive as M. Sabatier must be followed with cautious step, and occasionally with a critical or distrustful halt. The proverbial phrase '*cum grano salis*' is not less useful to season our reading of Protestant lives of St. Francis than in perusing the equally fascinating records of other saints, e.g., of the monks of the West, by Catholic historians.

Within the narrow compass of this little book it is incidentally, and by suggestion only, that the 'heralds of revolt' and their influence on the age will be indicated as factors in the story. Tocco's *Eresia nel Medio Evo* sums up its 550 learned pages on the heresies and schisms of the age in some four hundred words of conclusion to which, without explicit reference, we are indebted in many pages of our narrative. This story has for its main purpose the study of men and of movements within, and subject to, the Church of their day; it is a tale of reformation indeed,

but reformation by revival and not by revolution. God fulfils Himself in many ways, and the divine way in the Middle Ages of Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena was other than in the modern ages heralded by Luther, Calvin, and Knox, other even than in the earlier movements of Waldo, Wyclif, and Hus. To have touched even lightly on these 'precursors of Protestantism' would have carried us far beyond the limits allotted to the present sketch, and therefore, noble as is their place and part within the period, it finds little reference and less record here. Dr. Workman's *Dawn of the Reformation* has happily made needless any passing and less worthy tribute to the influence of Hus and Wyclif on the eve of the great revolt.

**Scene**

The *scene* of the story is defined almost as sharply as its period. By common consent the Italy of the Middle Ages was the Holy Land of every type and phase of the manifold renascent life of that era. Art and literature found there their second birth and nurture, and on the very eve of the Renaissance the religious revival of the thirteenth century broke forth from the same source and spring. Religion was then, as Gebhart has well said, 'the noble work of the Italian genius. The poetry, the art, and the politics which, from the thirteenth century, made Italy the principal fount and centre of

Western civilization, received from the religious sentiment a constant and noble inspiration. Up to the thirteenth century Italian Christianity had its precursors, prophets, martyrs; it had the full consciousness of its genius only in the season when the good news from Assisi irradiated the valleys of Umbria. From the time of St. Francis it illumines every great soul and penetrates to the last recesses of the Italian character. Its beams, emanating from the great Christians of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, have rested over the cradle of John the Pisan, of Giotto, of Jacopone da Todi, and of Dante.'

**Influence of St. Francis**

It is to Italy, then—and above all to the early Franciscans—that we look for the beginnings and first-fruits of the mediaeval revival; it is there that much of the popular religion of the Middle Ages will take form and colour for many generations. There are other schools, other influences, other movements that must find place even in a compressed outline of the age, but Francis is the inevitable and arresting central figure for any student of the religious life of the epoch. He dominated the soul of his age as his monumental church at Assisi now dominates the scene of his story. Every study of the period, slight and summary, or scholarly and serious, must needs add its stone to the cairn that marks the

place of the little poor man of Assisi in this Appian Way of historic renown. No fact is more expressive of this supremacy than the comparative obscurity which has befallen the kindred work of his great contemporary, St. Dominic, the first founder of the fellowship of the friars and, above all, the chief of the order of preaching friars. From Dominic's hand the new fraternities took their shape and organization; he is, as Creighton has said, the statesman of the movement; but Francis is its informing life, and to after ages, as to his own day, he stands forth as its spiritual head and inspired representative. The 'father of the poor' has won in the hearts and memories of men a place and a fame never accorded to the 'hammer of heretics'; and history has found it easier to cherish the fair name of the Franciscans as the 'minstrels of God' than the more dubious renown of the Dominicans as the 'watch-dogs of the Lord.' Yet the work and influence of the older founder of the friars has a noble share in the early annals of the mediaeval revival, and it is again only by necessity of the limits of our sketch that his part in the story is but little present in these pages.

There are other saints, other evangelists of the age, and in other lands than Italy, and here and there the more neglected and not always less worthy figures and passages in the tale

of the mediaeval revival are summarily indicated or presented on the scene.

I am indebted to many sources—to some for many years—for much that is set out in these chapters. It will suffice to indicate here, beyond the well-known English (or translated) lives of Francis — Sabatier always first—a few of the principal books read or consulted during the preparation of this manual.

**Sources**

JOERGENSEN: St. François d'Assise. (This work has been recently translated into English);

OZANAM: Les poëtes franciscains en Italie au 13me siècle;

SABATIER and others: Franciscan Essays;

Ed. by A. G. LITTLE: Liber Exemplorum ad usum predicantium saeculo xiii., &c. (A curious collection of 'edifying' illustrations for the use of Franciscan preachers);

LOCCATELLI: Vita di Sa. Chiara;

CAVALCA: Vita di San Francesco. (A fourteenth-century popular Italian version based on Bonaventura's Latin work on St. Francis);

Ed. by P. UBALD D'ALENÇON: Les Opuscules de St. François;

ED. CESARI: I Fioretti di San Francesco;

COULTON: From St. Francis to Dante;

MACDONELL: Sons of Francis;

THUREAU-DANGIN: Saint Bernardine of Siena;

FATHER CUTHBERT: The Friars and how they came to England. (A translation of Thomas of Eccleston's thirteenth-century work);

LECOY DE LA MARCHE: La Chaire française au Moyen Age;
LEMPP: Elie de Cortone;
RAMBUTEAU: Le Bienheureux Colombini;
GEBHART: Moines et Papes;

and various volumes published by the Franciscan Society. One work calls for more specific and grateful reference, viz., M. Gebhart's *L'Italie Mystique: Histoire de la Renaissance Religieuse au Moyen Age*, a work which I believe to be unequalled, within its moderate compass of 350 pages, for clearness and fullness in the presentation of the historic conditions and personal forces of the Franciscan period. I am glad to find, by a recent reference to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (article St. Francis), that this opinion is supported by the weighty and competent judgement of Dr. Butler. It is strange, in the modern cult of Franciscan literature, that no English translation has appeared of this most valuable book.

Dr. Workman's *Church of the West in the Middle Ages* is too well known to need commendation to the readers of these pages. His *Evolution of the Monastic Ideal* has appeared since the following chapters were written. A careful and critical estimate of Franciscan literature is given in this latter book, and to it I would refer the student desirous of further direction in this field of research than is found in my appendix to Chapter II. There is also in the fore-mentioned article by Dr. Butler an excellent bibliography, presenting the last phases and findings of critical study on the vexed questions of Franciscan origins and sources.

PS.—A fuller life of S. Bernardino, by A. G. Ferrers Howell, appears as these pages go to press.

# THE MEDIAEVAL REVIVAL

## CHAPTER I

### *FORERUNNERS*

'If there be any here of the house of Lot, let him make haste and fly far from the walls of Sodom; if any be here of the house of Noah let them be swift to join those sheltered in the Ark.'

*Joachim of Fiore.*

THE visitor to the cathedral church of St. Rufino in Assisi is shown, amongst its sacred treasures, a baptismal font which counts, even in that land so rich and replete with the spoils of time, as one of its worthiest relics of hoarded history. For in the waters of this font, in the closing years of the twelfth century, two children were baptized whose destiny it was to shape in a supreme measure and in diverse ways the plastic life of their day—one in the perishable form of a brilliant but ephemeral civilization, the other in the less imposing but more enduring mould of religious revival. The early thirteenth century has no

**Frederic II and Francis**

more arresting figures on its crowded and coloured canvas than those of Frederic and Francis; and through them, as extreme types, the life of their age found striking and signal expression. To them it was given, above all their contemporaries, on the one hand to quicken and startle the listless and world-weary into hopes and dreams of a fuller and richer life, on the other hand to greet the restless and fevered desire of the age with a promise and foretaste of possession and power. For if the era seems to us, in certain of its aspects, to be one of deep despair, it seems no less, in other moods, to be an age of fierce desire. No picture of the time is just which fails to present both phases of its life to our eyes, its inertia of world-weariness and its eagerness of world-want. And to both these moods Frederic and Francis responded — the one with the lure of the earthly, the other with the earnest of the heavenly renascence, to stimulate or satisfy the soul of their age. With the one the hope and dream spent itself in exploring and exploiting the pleasure and power, the passion and pride of the world of sense and time: with the other it passed into the vision and attainment of divine and immortal life. For the one, — born to the vast heritage of the Empire, greeted in his day as 'Stupor Mundi,' '*the wonder of the world*,' ardent, impetuous, challenging and questioning the limits

of secular science and art, of ecclesiastical discipline and authority,—for him was reserved the gloom and darkness of a defeated and broken life: to the other, the plebeian-born, the self-renouncing and world-forsaking *poverello* of Assisi, it was given to see the coming of the kingdom of God amongst men, and to know in his brief span of life that his work was the seed and promise of the endless and fruitful harvest of God. It is with Francis and the mediaeval revival, and not with Frederic and the early renaissance, that this book is concerned; but the one true and divine answer by the Umbrian saint to the yearning heart and questioning mind of that age will be understood more clearly by its foil and contrast in the response of the secular and sceptical reason, incarnate in the will and the work of the Sicilian King.

Other voices spoke to the disquietude or despair of the twelfth century; their message also contributed to, and prepared for, the coming of the Friars and the dawning of the new day in Italy and Western Europe. In the bankruptcy of traditional Christianity, discredited by the moral corruption or worldly ambition of the Papal Court; amid the failure of monasticism, rendered impotent by its desertion of the world; the divine discontent of the age listened—now eagerly,

**Religious Influences of the age**

now fearfully—to messages and movements predicting the end of the world, or prophesying a new and nobler faith and discipline in a penitent and purified Church and State. And it was only because the fallow ground had been thus broken up that the preachers of the early thirteenth century found for their living seed so ready and responsive a soil—so quick and rich a harvest. It is worth while to dwell a little on each of these elements in their contribution to the conditions calling for, or to the causes producing, the great revival of the Middle Ages.

**(a) The Papacy**

*Ecclesiasticism*—as represented in the Roman hierarchy—had ceased, with its accession to secular power, to hold its spiritual prestige in the conscience of the age. 'Earth gets its price for what earth gives us'; and when the just tribute has been paid to the oft-repeated noble service of the Church, to its defence of human laws and liberties against despotic and arbitrary powers, it remains to be said that too often the last state of the unhappy peoples was worse than the first; one tyrant was exchanged for another—it might even be King Log for King Stork. The successors of St. Peter had bartered the ministry of a compassionate apostle for that of a powerful patron: to the tender ardour of the pastor of the flock of Christ had succeeded the fierce ambition of

the prince, lording it over the heritage of the nations. The rising Italian communes saw in the Church not only the absolute dispenser of heavenly grace, but an arbitrary despot in the secular state; protective it might be of nascent and struggling liberties, but menacing finally to fullness and freedom of life and growth. They saw the apostolic graces disdained, the gospel virtues despised; mercy and meekness, poverty and purity, were exiled from the Council and Court of Rome. A thousand years and yet a hundred more, says Dante, had poverty, 'of her first spouse bereft'—'a bride whom none approves, but rather, as on death, would close the door'—led life but hard and sore bested. It may be doubted if even the worst corruption and most relaxed morality of this era of the Papacy had shaken more the faith and hope of men in the Church than did its shameless greed of gain and boundless ambition for power.

(b) **Monasticism**

*Monasticism* again had abdicated its noblest influence over the age by its aloofness and remoteness from the common life of men. If the influence of the great Bernard had not wholly spent itself in the fifty years that followed his death, it had wellnigh ceased by the beginning of the thirteenth century to be the spirit and temper of monastic life. The cloister was no longer a place for the sacrificial cult of personal perfection and beneficent ser-

vice; it was a despairing retreat from a hopeless world, or even, for some communities, a pleasant social club, with many privileges and few exacting responsibilities to God or man. If the ideal purity of personal life was here and there conserved, in the cell of the anchorite or the cloister of the order, it had ceased to communicate itself to the sinning and sorrowing humanity at its doors; it had no message to, it had no attraction for, the popular conscience of the Italy of that hour, quickened then in its yearnings and questionings by the shocks and changes of political and social life. Men saw in the monastic practice, if not in its ideal, only the absolute condemnation of that for which they struggled, the absolute renunciation of that which they held most dear, the full-orbed life of freed humanity.

But the religious disquietude remained; the divine discontent sought appeasement or answer, now in the thought of the approaching end of the world, and now in prophetic voices that broke on men's ears with the promise of a nobler discipline and a purer faith. Such voices were never wanting in this epoch of preparation, the early years of the twelfth century.

**(c) 'Heresies'**

Successive movements traversed the peninsula and touched for a season the life of their day with the light of hope. In Milan the *Patarins* (the 'Rag-pickers'—a term of con-

tempt), in Lombardy and Central Italy the *Catharites* (or Purists) found many followers, who saw in their teaching the promise of a purified Church and a free State. The first of these propaganda uttered itself in futile revolt, and was silenced by force of arms; the second, spreading like leaven, penetrated the mass of Italian life for more than a century, and had a far-reaching and powerful influence in the religious and social life of the age.

Both these movements (especially the Catharite) had an ascetic rather than evangelical character; their obscure sources carry us back to the early gnostic doctrines of the evil of matter and the essential curse of the flesh; both (and especially the Patarin) had a prounced democratic element of resistance to the world-powers of their time: they were scarcely less formidable to the secular tyranny than to the spiritual corruption of their day. It was, however, in the Albigenses and the Waldenses (differing much from each other) that these tendencies found, in France and various continental countries, their widest and most persistent field of influence; their chief significance in the Italian religious life of our period is found in the alternate satisfaction and stimulus they gave to the spiritual unrest of the age, in their preparation for a nobler and more positive work than their own.

Other movements, seemingly futile, yet finally

fruitful, had their part in this breaking and harrowing of the soil. Arnold of Brescia carried the freedom of thought he had learned from Abelard into boldness of act, and in Rome itself he sought to found the Utopia of a spiritual democracy, at war with the corrupt and luxurious Papal hierarchy. He perished in the struggle, crushed between the upper and nether millstone of Emperor and Pope, but left in men's hearts dreams and hopes they would not willingly let die.

**(d) Arnold of Brescia**

One fatal flaw marked these and the kindred movements of the age: their lack of a positive content and definite form to satisfy the craving and need of the heart. All cried, like the Baptist in the Wilderness, 'Repent ye'; some even proclaimed 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' — like John, they quickened the people to musing and expectation, but Italy yet waited a vision to show, a voice to speak, the Christ of God among the sons of men. It is doubtful, indeed, if the terror of men at the approach of the year 1000 as the end of the dispensation, and their lingering dread through the generations that followed it, have not been exaggerated by later historians, but it is not doubtful that the religious preoccupation of this time is one of fear rather than of hope; it was the Christ of the Apocalypse rather than the Christ of the

Gospel, the Ancient of Days rather than the Lamb of God, who was seen on the near horizon—a great dread rather than a great desire.

It is not strange, then, that these stirrings of revolt rather than revival, this oft-repeated exodus which led only to the wilderness, left the generations they touched at once more despairing of the Church in her manifest failure and corruption, more desirous of her in her mystical glory and ideal purity. In the same hour sight darkened and saddened, but vision kindled and gladdened, hearts that yearned unto and eyes that searched for the dawn of God. 'Every morning Italy—too young yet to yield herself to indifference or to incredulity, to deprive herself of a positive faith—wandered forth to seek, somewhat at hazard, the way, the truth, and the life; every evening, like a pilgrim, disenchanted and weary, she returned toward the ancient home where rested still her hope' (Gebhart).

It was at this moment, 'when the martyr stake of Arnold marked the last station of Italy's dolorous Calvary,' that the voice of a prophet came to quicken and revive the oft-deceived, but never extinct, expectation of the heart. No figure is more obscure, no doctrine more confused, no influence more decisive in this era of preparation than that of Joachim of Fiore, a

(e) Joachim

Calabrian monk and seer. Tocco, in his account of the period, accords to him and his doctrines a full and discriminating narrative and criticism; here it must suffice to state the salient and significant character of his work as it touched on and prepared for the evangelical revival of the next generation. Joachim (*d.* 1202) —whose name was afterwards invoked for many theories foreign to his authentic doctrine— taught that the third age, that of the Spirit, was about to come. The dispensation of the Father had given place to that of the Son; and in turn this would yield to that of the Spirit, the year 1260 being marked as the beginning of this third and final era. The first was the age of fear, the second of grace, the third of love; the first was slavery, the second filial servitude, the third liberty; the first bore nettles, the second roses, the third will bear lilies. This was no new doctrine to the Church, least of all the teaching that this final age, even as had been that of the Son, was to be ushered in by apocalyptic terrors and woes of Antichrist, and judgement beginning at the house of God. The innovating and significant message of Joachim was the emphasis laid on love as the distinguishing note of this final age of the world. A new climate of mystical tenderness is entered in these visions of the Calabrian seer; we catch once more the music of the Messianic prelude of Isaiah xi.; we antici-

pate the Canticle of the Sun, that noble poetic testament of Francis to his generation. All the grotesque imagery or uncouth terrors of this strange prophetic oracle are of little value or virtue; its supreme meaning and message are found in this heralded advent of love and of mercy in the new age. He purged the hearts of men alike by terror and by pity; and it was to hearts so prepared, when the long watch-night of crouching and shuddering fear was past, that there appeared the gracious gospel of the kindness and love of God our Saviour. In the very year of Joachim's death, Francis of Assisi is dreaming in his Perugian prison of a day when He shall be worshipped by the whole world—and in his dream is building better than he knew.

## CHAPTER II

### *FOUNDERS*

The Providence—which all things doth dispose
With such deep counsels that all mortal gaze
Is baffled ere to that great depth it goes—
That unto Him she loves might bend her ways
The Bride of Him who, with a bitter cry,
Espoused her with the blood we bless and praise,
In fuller peace, more steadfast loyalty,—
Her, for her good, with two high chiefs endowed,
That they on either sides her guides might be.
The soul of one with love seraphic glowed;
The other by his wisdom on our earth
A splendour of cherubic glory showed.

*Dante* (*Paradise, Canto* xi.).

**Dominic and Francis (a) Kinship**

FROM the days when Christ sent forth His disciples 'two by two into every city and place whither He Himself was about to come,' the ages of revival in the Church have been heralded by the simultaneous quickening of apostolic ardour and of holy vision in kindred, though often dissimilar, souls. The fire of heaven has fallen at once on far separated altars, to mingle afterwards its mounting flame in one common aspiration and exaltation to God. No more striking and signal

instance of this method of divine operation can be found than in the contemporary rise of Dominic and Francis, the twin spirits and true founders of the mediaeval revival. The chroniclers of the Middle Ages, in their love of picturesque and parabolic history, lent easy credence and gave ready currency to every tale of chance but fortunate encounter of such fellow souls; they loved to paint these crowded hours of glorious life in which such happy kinship found its apt expression in some greeting at the crossing of the ways. They found no difficulty in setting down the saintly Louis of France at the door of brother Giles in Perugia, where without word spoken they gazed into each other's heart and held fellowship in sacred silence—despite the fact that Louis' fatal journey to the Holy Land was by routes far removed from the Umbrian home of the friars. The story was good enough to be true; it *was* true to the ideal if not to the reality of history; and the poet's licence was the privilege, in an uncritical age, even of the prose narrator of events. Happily we may accept with good historical conscience the not less romantic record of the meeting—alike at Rome and at Assisi—of Dominic and Francis, 'those two bright lights of the world.' Thomas of Celano ends his account of their contest in humility with an improving exhortation and an edifying story.

'What say ye, sons of the saints! Our

fathers, filled with wisdom, turn their faces to the mercy-seat and look familiarly on one another; but the sons, filled with envy, are to one another grievous to behold. What shall the body do if it has a divided heart? Make, O Lord, the disciples humble beneath the wings of humble masters; make kindred spirits kind: and mayest thou see thy children's children and peace upon Israel.' 'And then,' he continues, 'as they departed thence Blessed Dominic asked St. Francis if he would deign to give him the cord wherewith he was girded, which St. Francis, though reluctant from humility, at last consented to do, and Dominic most devoutly girded himself beneath his inner tunic with the cord that had been given him. At last they clasped hands and commended themselves each to the other most sweetly, and the one saint said to the other, 'I would, brother Francis, that thy religion and mine might be one, and that we might live in the Church after the like pattern.' And when at length they parted, St. Dominic said to several who were standing by, 'Verily, I say unto you that the other religions ought to follow this holy man Francis, so great is the perfection of his holiness.' It is in the spirit of this early narrative that Dante in his 'Paradise' puts the eulogy of Francis on the lips of the Dominican Aquinas, and that of Dominic in the mouth of the Franciscan Bonaventura.

But even in the days of Dante, a century later than the meeting of these founders, men had but too much occasion, as they watched the course of the two orders, to echo Thomas of Celano's prayer and to desire the fulfilment of Dominic's wish. It is doubtful, however, if Dominic himself, with all the sincerity of his admiration and all the fervour of his love for Francis, ever conceived or cherished in his heart the vision and passion of apostleship as they flamed and glowed within the heart of his younger contemporary. Bishop Creighton may be less than just when he says that 'Dominic fades into that state of obscurity into which we are glad to see all statesmen ultimately settle down'—an epigram is not always the last word of historical judgement; but at least this terse summary is true to the broad facts of history. The slow verdict of the ages has but confirmed the swift and popular instinct of the hour in hailing the Italian layman rather than the Spanish ecclesiastic as the moving and vital spirit of the thirteenth-century revival. It is possible, nay even probable, that without the work of Dominic the mission of Francis would have lacked the form to assure its permanent life; it is certain that without the influence of Francis the organization of Dominic would have failed to serve and to shelter a quickening and renewing force.

(b) **Difference**

The oft-repeated description of St. Francis as 'the John Wesley of the thirteenth century' fails to recognize some striking and essential differences between the thirteenth- and the eighteenth-century evangelists. The genius of Wesley is evident not less in the fixing mould than in the flowing metal—not less in the containing form than in the quickening forces of the evangelical revival. If to him we owe the primary and characteristic Methodist experience, it is also to him that we owe its not less characteristic expression in an order and through an organization faithful and friendly to its spiritual temper and aim. In the early *Minutes* of the Methodist Conference, as surely as in the famous *Journal*, we see the impress of the mighty and often masterful personality of Wesley; we trace his supreme influence in the rise of Methodism and in the progress of the great revival. But to the mind of Francis the work of the ecclesiastical statesman was always alien and irksome; he owed to pressure from without and to the march of events the successive steps by which his order received its effective form and became the vehicle, not only of his ardent and apostolical purpose, but also of the deep and far-reaching schemes of the Papal court. To Dominic without, and yet more to Elias within the Franciscan rule, the order owed much of the framework and outline informed and inspired by the love and zeal of

Francis. From the beginning the two great founders were set apart by personal characteristics, even as their common work and their kindred influence would keep an individual and distinctive seal through all their after ministry. A brief account of each will serve to indicate the chief notes of their several orders, in their inception and their primitive spirit.

### (*a*) DOMINIC

Born in 1170 (twelve years before Francis) at Calahorra, canon of Osma in his twenty-fourth year, Dominic, a Spaniard and an ecclesiastic, aristocratic and learned, first realized his religious vocation by his early contact with heresy in Southern France. All the elements of his birth and nurture, all the influences of his spiritual training and of his early career, left their imprint on his later and vaster work as an apostle and evangelist to his age. After a brief period of reforming and missionary zeal, he was sent on political missions which led him through Languedoc, at that time a hotbed of the Albigensian revolt. There and then he conceived the horror and hatred of heretical and schismatical teaching which were to enter into and embitter his apostolical work—to the obscuring, in historic fame, of its nobler and worthier features. It is doubtful if he actively

**Dominic (a) Early Career**

aided the ruthless measures of the most sanguinary of all crusades against heresy; it is still more doubtful if his voice was ever lifted to silence or to slacken the cruel zeal of the Papal emissaries. Even the genius and eloquence of Lacordaire have failed to present, in his life of Dominic, a figure commending itself to the love, or commanding the homage, of men's hearts. But no sketch of the age can justly ignore the creative and positive part of this first of the friars in the rise and progress of the mediaeval revival. By his self-abnegation and asceticism he struck the key-note of the new apostolate of love and sacrifice, though it was left to another hand to touch the richer and the sweeter chords of the message of grace to his age.

**(b) Diego and Dominic**

It was at Montpellier, where Dominic, with Diego, his bishop, met the legates of the Pope, that his sense of a vocation may be said to have awakened. He found them discouraged and despairing in the consciousness of failure to win back the heretics to the faith, or to persuade the nobles to cope with the growing peril. Glancing at the rich robes and remembering the luxurious habits of these papal messengers and courtly churchmen, the Spaniards concluded that a more Christlike apostolate might prevail where these had failed, and henceforth they vowed themselves to the

poverty of the gospel and the preaching of the Cross as the true weapons of warfare in the holy war against error and evil. In an age when the monasteries, even Clairvaux as well as Clugny, were dominated by the twin passions of the love of property and the love of power, such a return to the spirit of Christ was sufficient to arrest the thoughts and arouse the interest of the generation to which Dominic appealed.

The death of Diego on the threshold of his work left to the younger man the leadership of this new and worthier crusade. An order of preachers had been purposed, and its first members chosen, before the loss of his companion, but it was only when the cruel campaign of Simon de Montfort against the Albigenses was past that the idea so long brooded over took shape and found finally its sanction from Rome. At the repeated request of Dominic, Honorius III gave his formal approval to the new fraternity, vowed to study and to preaching, their only object and mission to seek and save the souls of men. The parochial priest and the cloistered monk had failed to save the world; it was now the hour and opportunity of the itinerant apostle. And it was with the revival of preaching that the revival of religion began in the thirteenth century; the preaching friars of Dominic were

**(c) Foundation of the Order**

the first harbingers of the new day. In 1217 he called together his sixteen brethren—eight Frenchmen, seven Spaniards, and one Englishman—and appointed them to their centres of labour, significantly enough in University towns, Rome, Paris, Bologna, &c. In the year of Dominic's death, 1221, his friars came to Canterbury and thence to Oxford. Eight provinces and sixty houses of the brethren were that year numbered in the order. Poverty, embraced as the rule of his personal life from his early years, had now become the accepted law of the order, in this following in the traces of the Franciscans; communities of holy women had been formed, and the regular army of the separated friars was supplemented by 'the militia of Jesus Christ,' living a secular life, but under spiritual obligations and vows.

Dominic's work was done; a noble work indeed, but of promise and of preparation rather than fulfilment. For that another type of religious genius was needed, as zealous, as sacrificing, as impassioned for the salvation of men, but with gifts and graces of evangelical ministry absent and alien from the temper of the preaching friars. They had warred against ignorance and error; they were inspired by the horror and hatred of heresy; they sought amongst the cultured and the noble classes to make God and His visible Church

**(d) Characteristics**

credible to the mind of their age; a new order now came forth, hailed with joy as we have seen by Dominic in its founder, an order of men who set themselves to cope with sorrow and sin, who were inspired by pity for the leper and compassion for the poor, who sought amongst the masses of the people to make God and His Church lovable to the heart.

### (*b*) FRANCIS

> Wherefore the folk that love the cowering ways,
> The creatures timorous of the tread of man,
> Him their compassionate brother knew, and ran
> From refuge of their undiscovered days,
> As to the cloak of night's maternal mist,
> To shelter of this loved evangelist . . .
> Whose love forgat itself, nor knew it trod
> So close in station to its stricken God.
>
> *E. J. Thompson.*

**St. Francis (a) His Fame**

The apostle of the new order was Francis of Assisi, the best known and most loved figure of the Middle Ages. No man since the days of the Apostles has more richly and fully inherited the calling and promise of Christ, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'; for to this man of simple heart and single purpose, despising wealth and distrustful of learning, shunning fame as other men seek it, loving

the shadow as others the sun, rejoicing in man's common heritage in nature, but avoiding the splendours and dreading for his order the snares of man's art; to him it was given to open springs of poetry, to inspire schools of painting, to add new glories to architecture, and to contribute to the renewal of philosophy; to win a name and a fame that are almost a sacred cult, and to leave as the gathered essence of his spirit a psalm of praise which 'transfigures the world by a power of spiritual emotion.'[1]

'We have,' says a French writer, 'perusing the annals of legislators, of princes, of conquerors, found very few of them who have played so great a rôle and left so much of themselves in the world as Francis of Assisi'; whilst an English professor asserts that 'there is more contemporary, or nearly contemporary, literature about St. Francis than about any other man of the Middle Ages, except it be Becket.'

A detailed or descriptive life of the saint is unnecessary in view of the many and excellent studies or sketches that have already appeared. The well-known and deservedly-praised work by M. Sabatier; the later and critical study by Joergensen;—yet more the relics of early Franciscans, 'The Little Flowers

[1] On this subject the reader will find several suggestive chapters in Lafenestre's 'St. François d'Assise et Savonarole —Inspirateurs de l'art Italien' (Hachette).

of St. Francis,' 'The Legend of the Three Companions,' 'The Mirror of Perfection'—history with a halo—all these and many other 'Lives' of the saint leave to us the simpler task of indicating only the leading facts, and estimating the dominant influences of his service and his spirit as the chief agent and the central personal force of the revival.

**(b) Early Years**

Like his older contemporary, Dominic, he took from his race and nurture elements and powers of life which shaped and coloured all his after-days and strongly ruled his character and career. Born at 1182 in Assisi, a little hill town of Umbria—his father a prosperous cloth-merchant, who travelled far and wide to the famous fairs of the Middle Ages, his mother (according to later testimony) a Provençal maiden of noble birth, espoused by Pietro Bernardone on one of his journeys through France,—Francis received alike from his Italian and his Provençal stock, from his secular environment and early training, the dominant features of his rich and fascinating personality. The poetic scene and the romantic age of his birth find their happiest and most winning presentation in the first chapters of his eventful life. All the vivid colour and rapid movement, the eager passion of sense and the intense yearning of soul of that era—the youth of mediaevalism as Dante's generation is its man-

hood—seem reflected in the moods and phases of this story of his early years. A born master of men, he was hailed as leader in the light-hearted revelry of the gay youth of his city; an elect servant of God, he was receptive and responsive, even in his worldly joys, to the calls of Christ—calls heard at one season in the leper's or the beggar's appeal, at another in visions of a nobler and higher leadership of men. Of heroic soul and tender heart, he experienced in himself not only the passionate joys and haunting sorrows, but also the implacable rancours and embittered strifes of his stirring age, an age when a knight gives the generally needless counsel to a boy chevalier, 'If war fail thee in thine own country, get thee to another,' an age again 'when each party made it a point to dishonour its ephemeral triumphs by abominable crimes, and one was sure of seeing the martyrs of to-day become the executioners of to-morrow' (Migne).

In his twentieth year he was made a prisoner whilst fighting for his native town against the neighbour city of Perugia, and for a year or more remained in captivity, a 'cheerful sojourner' even within the prison walls.

**(c) Religious crisis**

The crisis of his life came shortly after his return to Assisi, a crisis prolonged through many months, and obscure for us in some of its stages, but issuing in a con-

version and a consecration which have left their mark on centuries of history. He fell sick, and on his recovery sought peace and deliverance from his weariness of soul, not in a monastery—then the panacea for every spiritual malady—but in a crusade against the foreign domination in Sicily. This choice of an active and aggressive mission, rather than a despairing monastic retreat, to restore the lost harmonies of life, is prophetic of the man in every period of his after-life. But once again he sickened, and saw his dreams of military glory vanish. He returned to Assisi, went on pilgrimage to Rome, experienced all the vicissitudes of seekers after God in every age and race, from Augustine in his *Confessions* to Carlyle in his *Sartor Resartus*; he heard, like Bunyan in his *Grace Abounding*, voices from heaven, and had, like him, his disappointments with would-be counsellors, 'good men, but strangers to much conflict with the devil.'

(d) **Conversion**

Kneeling one day in a half-ruined and forsaken church by the wayside, uttering his now ceaseless prayer, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' he heard from the crucifix a voice which said, 'Francis, seest thou not that My house is in ruins: go and restore it for Me.' Conversion for him was realized in consecration; sacrifice and service were one

for him with salvation. In swift succession he reached and realized the several stages of his apostolic vocation: by the sale of all his possessions to fulfil his mission to restore the ruined church; by the renunciation of his father's house to say henceforth only, 'My Father which art in heaven'; by the gathering round him of souls who felt a 'kindred flame, full of zeal and full of love'; by the further calls through the word of Christ in the Gospel to go forth and preach, and thus give wider meaning to the first command to build up the ruined church of God. 'By the similitude of three churches which Francis had restored it was shown that the Church of God through his teaching and practice should be renewed by three things, to wit, by his example, by his rule, and by his doctrine' (Cavalca).

From the earliest hour of his consecration there rested upon him the spirit of that ministry which 'draws out its soul to the hungry and satisfies the afflicted soul'; . . . which 'builds the old waste places . . . the foundations of many generations . . . and is called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.' At every stage the fascination of the call of Christ for Francis and his first companions was felt in its absolute commands and precepts, even more than in its rich rewards and gracious promises: it was the supreme passion to give rather than to get which

became the dominant and distinguishing note of the Franciscan revival. This was the master-light of all his seeing: it was this which became the glory and power of his influence amongst men. All that followed in the day of his mission was foreshadowed in the dawn of his conversion to God; the theme of that prelude runs in and through every bar of the full and rich symphony of his life.

(e) Apostolate

Two years after his conversion he heard the call, 'Provide neither gold nor silver—as ye go, preach'; and with the early disciples and apostles of his as yet informal order, 'the little brothers of Assisi,' Friars Minor, he went through the villages and towns of Umbria and central Italy preaching the gospel to the poor, and, in the bold phrase of a chronicler, 'listening to those to whom God Himself had ceased to give heed.' No part of the peninsula could have offered at that hour so favourable a starting-point for this new movement of evangelism. As Gebhart has said, 'these little towns, untouched by the superior civilization of Florence, Milan, Venice, formed an isolated and innocent world, and were a birthplace of predilection for a religious renascence.' Too distant from the influence of Rome to be fettered in its initial movements by ecclesiastical trammels, too remote from the great cities and communes to be checked or corrupted by the

pride or power of political life, the message of Francis to his age came into the valleys of Umbria as the direct and primary answer of God to the first and deepest needs of the soul; it promised pardon and peace to souls distressed by sin and to a society distracted by strife. 'Italy had never heard an apostle more consoling; he did not preach the despairing asceticism of the monks and the hermits . . . he did not raise a crusade against the old Church, as Arnold of Brescia had attempted to do. Men saw in him, from the first acts of his vocation, a man of the South, an Italian, a poet, a friend of movement and of light, ignorant of sadness, whom no bitter thought had ever disquieted. He believed that all is good here below, society and nature' (Gebhart). Instead of the apostle of denunciation, with the terrors of judgement, men now heard the angel of annunciation with the gospel of peace. Thomas of Celano compares the influence of his preaching to the rising of a radiant star on the horizon, or again to the dawn of morning after a frightful night of shadows. 'It was as at the arrival of spring when the grain springs from the soil and the flowers expand to the sun. All the aspect of the region was changed; like a great stream, rich in bounty and fertilizing power, Francis moved amongst the peoples, watering everywhere the fruitful ground of hearts even to the making all expand in

flowers of virtue.' Free alike from dogmatism and from fanaticism, his evangelistic message anticipates the words and fulfils the precept of a modern poet:

> I say to thee, do thou repeat
> To the first man thou mayest meet
> In lane, highway, or open street—
>
> That he and we and all men move
> Under a canopy of love,
> As broad as the blue sky above.

Of his brethren he said in later days, when disorder arose, 'If I cannot correct them by preaching, warning, and example, I will not become an executioner to punish and scourge, as do the powers of this world.' To the poor he offered, not the pity that patronizes while it protects, but the respect and regard of a brother entrusted with the tender mercies of God. Men heard in him 'the tale of the divine pity' told by lips they 'felt to be moved by human pity.' And as he preached first the privilege of peace with God for the personal conscience, so too he taught the duty of peace between men in the social order, between city and city, class and class, man and man. 'Repass through your imagination the innumerable dreams of the popular life of the Italy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and you are sure to find always present with his influence

a preaching Franciscan.' Imbued with his spirit his friars spread rapidly from Umbria through Italy to Germany, France, and England —they carried to Eastern lands, drenched by the blood poured forth in the strife between Crescent and Cross, the seed of the gospel, and were ready and eager to enrich it with the nobler blood of the martyr saint.[1] The tale of that generation of the friars is one of the glorious chapters in the golden book of missionary zeal and sacrificial love.

**(f) Secret of his power**

If we ask the secret of this marvellous power of Francis equally in his own age and in his memory amongst men, the answer greets us in well-nigh every page of the *Fioretti* and like-minded mediaeval records of the saint. It is not only that there meets in him a boundless faith in God with a matchless love for men; it is also that by the gifts of his first, as by the graces of his second, birth he was pre-eminently the 'chosen vessel' for the redeeming purpose of God. Rich in the best elements of our common humanity, and responsive to every touch of the Divine Hand, at once the echo of the human yearning for

[1] 'A bloodless crusade,' as Cesare Cantù writes, 'the war-cry of which was—Peace be with you.' (Crociata incruenta dove il grido di guerra era—La pace sia con voi!)

God and the voice of the divine yearning for man, he became in a supreme sense the incarnation of the religious genius of his age and race, and his preaching the deepest expression of its spiritual feeling, as Dante's great poem is the noblest expression of its spiritual thought. The pre-eminent charm which made him a master of men and cast its spell even over the creatures of forest and field, of sea and sky, was linked with an absolute consecration to the service of Christ. Sabatier has noted in the *Speculum Perfectionis* and other unofficial biographies of Francis 'the magnificent bearing of the saint, the noble gait of his early days, coupled with humility of thought and action.' There is nothing in him of the human passiveness so often extolled in the saints; the simple and even the grotesque in experience are found side by side with the sublime and the sacred. If 'the meanest flower that blows' or 'the meanest thing that feels' is not for him too small for joys and thoughts that rise to God; so too the minor ills of life, even the pests and plagues of the cell, are not too trivial to touch and trouble him, too small to seek and find the consolations of God. Such a chapter heading as 'Of the temptation that he had through mice whereof the Lord did comfort him and did certify him of His kingdom' is expressive of the spirit of the saint and significant of the temper of the early records.

**(g) Dominant chords**

If we seek yet further to define or describe the dominant notes in the character and influence of Francis, we must add something to the traits of matchless simplicity and sublime self-surrender in which one historian sums up his irresistible attraction—the further note of the positive spirit which ruled his character and informed his work.

*Joyous Asceticism*—renunciation, not as the negation, but as the affirmation of life—was one of the most marked features of the Franciscan type. Self-abnegation, painful discipline, and rigid penury were no new or strange thing in the contemporary history of the saints. Dominic in this had preceded and paralleled Francis; but the latter gave to renunciation a value and virtue it had hitherto lacked; it was no longer an abject surrender, but an eager acceptance of the good and joy of man's being—not a denial or a deprivation, but a deliverance. Having nothing, he possessed all things; poor, he made many rich. Men saw with wonder the exultant joy, the oft ecstatic hilarity of these mendicant minstrels of God, sent forth, as Francis said, to lift up the hearts of men and move to spiritual gladness—festive in their very fasting, troubadours of joyous poverty, rejoicing in tribulation and radiant in persecution. It was the impulse of the same

**(l) Joyous asceticism**

liberating grace which five centuries later would inspire John Nelson in his Yorkshire dungeon, 'worse than a hog-stye,' to cry out, 'Oh the glorious liberty of the sons of God!' and to say, 'My soul was so filled with the love of God that the place was a Paradise to me,'[1] and again, 'As soon as I was within the prison my heart was filled with joy unspeakable and my mouth with praise to my blessed Redeemer.' Ozanam says of the first generation of friars, 'in which the genius of the penitent of Assisi shines forth everywhere,' that 'the order is poor, but it has received the heritage of the triple love which its founder bore to God, to humanity, to nature. There are very few cells, however miserable, which are not illumined by visions of heaven.' The mean huts of these early followers of Francis offered, indeed, no canvas for the painter, nor was it yet the age when art became the consecrated record of their holy vision; but the joyous source and spring of the spiritual beauty of Fra Angelico's frescoes, in his Dominican cells at Florence, is found already in the radiant spirit of the Umbrian friars.

*In his evangelical passion*, as in his rapt asceticism, Francis struck a new and positive note. Salvation was to him not only a

[1] *Wesley's Veterans*, vol. iii. p. 111.

**(2) Evangelical Passion**

precious personal heritage from God; it was also a sacred stewardship for men. The very restraint and repression of the flesh was in order to the expression and enlargement of the spirit; so too the mountain solitude and silent retreat were but the preparation for the ministry in the crowded and clamorous street. Under the open sky, in the thronged ways, on the public squares, the Franciscans were found teaching, not the cultured little groups, but the massed multitudes of the people, the good, glad news of the love of God, His compassion for the poor, His pity for the leper and the pariah, His mercy to the sinner and the outcast. The instinct for the crowd which stamps St. Mark's Gospel with its distinctive seal, the loving-kindness of grace to the Gentile which breathes through St. Luke —these are eminently characteristic of the Franciscan apostolate in its first and best days. It was for the common people, and the common people heard it gladly.

Nor was the Roman Court slow to avail itself of this new power over the masses. It is customary to speak of Francis as the thirteenth-century Wesley, whom the Church did not cast out. It may be questioned if Francis could have been cast out by the Church of his day; he was, with all his largeness of

**(h) Innocent and Francis**

heart, too docile a son and too much a child of his age to act with the freedom of soul and independence of faith which mark Wesley's actions at the crises of his mission. Happily for the earlier evangelist and for his generation, he was not put to the test. Innocent III, the great pope of that age, gave to the order its authoritative seal—impelled, says a legend (emblazoned by Giotto in one of his frescoes at Assisi) by a vision which showed him the walls of the Lateran, head and mother of all the churches, tottering to their fall, but sustained by a humble friar in whom he recognized the suppliant of Assisi, once dismissed, but now recalled to receive his boon.

Brief as was his course, Francis lived to see the rapid growth and rising power of his order of Friars Minor; he saw also its offshoots, the Sisters Minor of St. Clare, and the tertiaries or disciples who, like the third order of St. Dominic, brought to their homes and to their business the grace of God in common life. Already in 1216 Jacques de Vitry writes that amid the worldly ambitions which have saddened him in the papal court at Perugia he has seen one consoling thing in these regions—

**(i) Increase and influence of the Friars Minor**

—'a great number of persons of both sexes, and amongst them many of the rich and fashionable world, who have renounced all for

the love of Christ and are now called Friars Minor, held in great honour by the Pope and Cardinals, but not busied with temporal affairs, labouring only and incessantly to save souls from the vanity of the world in order to hinder them from perishing. And already the grace of God has granted them a rich harvest. . . . They live after the model of the primitive Christian community of which it is written, "All the multitude of believers formed only one heart and one soul." In the day they go into towns and villages as fishers of men, at night they return to solitary places to give themselves to prayer. . . . The women live together in divers hospices, in the environs of towns: they refuse everything and maintain themselves solely by the labour of their hands. As for the men, they gather once in a year in a given place to eat in common and rejoice in their Lord, and there they discuss and promulgate laws consecrated afterwards by Papal approval. Then dispersing anew they dwell the rest of the year in Lombardy and Tuscany, in Apulia and Sicily. Quite recently a saintly man, and one who feared God—Nicolas, confessor of the Pope—abandoned the curia to take refuge with these brothers minor, but was quickly recalled, for the Pope could not dispense with him.'

In the year 1219 some five thousand members are reckoned at the general Assembly and five hundred more were claimants for ad-

mission. But amid all these signs of prosperity the founder of the Friars Minor discerned many clouds on the horizon; he lived to feel the misgivings of every dreamer of divine things who beholds his visions interpreted and travestied to other and lower ends and aims than his own; he saw the shaping of its plastic stuff by other hands, and even something of its hardening to the pattern of an ecclesiastical system. Sabatier has noted in the story of the 'Rules' for the order of Penitents (or the Tertiaries) the oft-repeated history of compromise between the Church and the world. 'Cest, au fond, l'histoire d'un des innombrables concordats que l'Eglise a signés avec le siècle.' Such compromises were cruel to the single-hearted purpose and simple faith of Francis. Further, he found in his ranks the twin evils of the pride of learning and the love of power; a 'theological college' at Bologna, in emulation of the Dominican school, seemed to threaten that godly simplicity he had sought and observed in his rule of the order. Let us honour the theologians, he said, and those who give to us the meaning of Scripture; but for his friars he wished that books should be few and studies be practical, for it is by prayer that one can best move and touch men's hearts.

**(j) Misgivings of St. Francis**

Yet worse was the love of wealth and power

forecast by the desire for nobler and worthier 'houses' of the order, instead of the single huts and cells of primitive days. He saw in brother Elias the rise of a type inimical to his own mind and heart, the ecclesiastic who craves distinction—not for himself indeed, but for the community he rules. No doubt Elias has been made the scapegoat for the sin of his age and class; he is the victim of a long and relentless strife; the butt of a partisan and rancorous hatred which passed on him the sentence of a Judas to his master and his order; but in its broad lines the verdict is true. Even to Francis, who loved and honoured him, he stood as the representative of another and alien age, and the confusion which gathers about his history does not obscure the central fact of his secular influence in the early and spiritual community. It was even possible for the saint to foreshadow the strife that for generations would make two warring camps within the order itself, the camps of the stricter and of the slacker observance: the Puritan and rigid section on the one hand—the 'Observants'; and the Conventuals, the 'Moderates,' on the other.

Such omens were already present to his mind and vexing to his heart when two years before his death, in his remote mountain retreat, he received in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the imprint of the wounds of Christ. The

**(k) Last Years —the Stigmata**

question of the stigmata is one of the historical mysteries not likely to be solved by modern research or by mediaeval testimony, and it is scarcely to be expected that a tradition born in an age of spiritual prepossessions should receive its best interpretation in an age of material prejudices. No detail of the saint's story has been so long discussed and so hotly debated; none remains so unsettled in its final meaning and value to the dispassionate reader, if such can be found. Legend or history, it may stand to us as a symbol of essential truth, for if ever the passion of the spirit wrote its record in the flesh, and, as a poet tells us, 'the body thought,' then indeed might Francis see in these marks the fulfilment of all his life's purpose and prayer:

> Let all Thy love and all Thy grief
> Graven on my heart for ever be.

In October 1226, worn out by hard privation and incessant toil, 'our Sister the death of the body' (as he had called it) claimed him; and lying on the bare ground, true in his last hour to the Lady Poverty he had espoused, he passed from his dark and narrow cell to the open vision and unveiled presence of his Master and Lord.

'The most Christ-like man of post-apostolic ages,' he has been called. It is perilous praise that sets any saint on that solitary height; but

none will dispute the judgement which from age to age, and from diverse schools, has hailed in Francis the rarest and richest of all the types of genius which give to mortal life immortal joys—the genius of religion.

For the Sources and Studies of Franciscan history see Appendix, p. 142.

# CHAPTER III

## *PREACHERS OF THE REVIVAL*

For St. Francis was fain to send for brother Pacifico, that in the world was called the King of Verse and the right courteous Doctor of Singers, and he was fain to give him sundry of the brethren to go with him throughout the world preaching and singing the praises of the Lord. For, said he, what be the servants of God but certain minstrels of His that so lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual gladness? And specially did he say this of the brothers Minor, that are given unto the people of God for the salvation thereof.—*Speculum Perfectionis.*

A RECENT critical writer, Müller, in his work, *Anfänge des Minoriten-Ordens und der Buss-bruderschaften* (Origin of the Minorite Orders and of the Brotherhoods of Penitence) has pointed out that the Minorite institution was not originally a religious order, but a free association of brethren, held together, not by any organization, but by 'a common ideal, a great personality, and the duty of preaching repentance and peace.' It was by their generous fulfilment of this duty that Francis and his early friars made both the

**The Friars and the New Evangelism**

common ideal and the great personality to be the quickening force of the spiritual movement of their age. With Dominic and Francis the word of the Cross became once more the 'power of God unto salvation'—the vivifying breath of the Spirit of God in the valley of vision. Needless to say the long slumber of centuries had not been entirely unbroken by the voice of prophet or preacher; but the popular and persistent ministry of preaching had well-nigh become a tradition among the masses of the people; the preachers of the Crusades rather than the heralds of the cross lingered in the memories of men—the appeal to the nations to recover the tomb of Christ rather than the call to the multitude to follow in daily life the commands of their living Lord. Within the pale of the Church the homilist here and there sought to instruct the people, and the parochial priest, by ritual and ceremony, fulfilled his ministry; but the evangelist, warning and wooing from sin, had well-nigh ceased to be heard. For the fire which burns in the bones, and the word which cannot be forborne, for the passion and power of the apostle, we have to look to the churches in revolt, to the 'heretics' or 'schismatics' of the age, who found in the word the quickening and liberating influence of God over the heart and conscience of man. The pre-eminent work of the friars was the restoration of 'the liberty of prophesying,' the re-

covery by the preacher and by his testimony of the power over the masses lost by the priest and his ritual. One of the earliest and most precious of Franciscan writings, the *Sacrum Commercium* (or 'Converse of Francis and his sons with Holy Poverty'), describes the Lady Poverty, hitherto despised and deserted by all, sought out and entreated to return by Francis and his disciples. (The parallel with Dante's well-known eulogium of the saint is very close in this part of the work.) She rejoices in these lovers who can give her only a stone for pillow, water in a broken pitcher, and herbs without salt or knife. 'Where is your oratory?' she asks, 'your refectory, your dormitory, your kitchen? Show me your cloister.' Then, taking her to a hill to behold the country around, they answer her, gazing thereon, 'Behold our cloister, Lady.' As one writer observes, Wesley's 'the world is my parish' is but an unconscious echo of the thirteenth century.

**Dominican and Franciscan Preachers**

The two orders vied with each other in their missionary zeal and ardent devotion, in their pity for the souls of men, in their passion for the glory of God. Even in 1273, when their example had quickened to emulation the regular clergy and the older orders, we find that out of sixty-one orators in the principal churches of Paris, whose discourses were conserved by a member

of the Sorbonne, thirty were Dominican and fourteen Franciscan friars. But within this common aspect of their mission distinctive features are to be traced; and marked differences, not only between the orders but also between the first and second half centuries of their course, assert themselves. Shortly after 1250 the devotion of the older fraternity to learned studies began to bear fruit in subtleties and artifices that weakened the direct and popular appeal of their sermons; with the Franciscans, less imperilled by the pride of learning, the change tended more in the direction of coarse familiarity, or childish triviality, in the treatment of their great theme. In the sons of Dominic and Francis alike mechanical method becomes a substitute for the earlier and happier inspirations of their preaching. Dante reflects the later and degenerate period when, in the twenty-ninth canto of his 'Paradise,' he says:

> For outward show each one his wit displays,
> His own inventions form the preacher's theme,
> And all the Gospel story silent stays . . .
> Now is our preaching done with jesting slight
> And mockings, and if men but laugh agape,
> The cowl puffs out, nor ask men if 'tis right.

But alike in the early and evangelical and in the later and learned phases of the movement, the order of Francis preserved in its preaching

a more popular character, retained much more of the simplicity of style and spirit of its best age. 'Quickly the Friars Minor spread themselves through the world to bring it back to the love of God and to respect for the poor. They became what they were to be during three centuries, the popular oracles of Italy, France, Spain, England, Flanders, and Germany' (Migne). Antony of Padua, evangelizing in France about 1227, cannot there find churches large enough to hold his hearers. He preaches in market-places and in ancient arenas, with sovereign force to touch the heart and pierce the conscience of the crowd.

**Popular Ministry of the Minorites**

Unhappily the fragments that remain of these appeals, as of many of the earlier sermons of the friars, give us but slight clues to the charm and power of the first preachers of the revival. But we have other testimony enabling us to recall or recreate the spirit of this ministry where its letter fails us. If we lack the text and even sometimes the theme of the sermon, we know the temper of the preacher. The early lives of Francis and his first disciples; the later story of Bernardino of Siena (an early fifteenth-century Franciscan, but kindred in spirit to the first of the friars); the two text-books for preachers, one by the Dominican Hubert de Romanis (died 1277), *De Eruditione Praedica-*

*torum*, the other, *Liber Exemplorum*, by an unknown English Franciscan of the thirteenth century — these and other sources yield to us a strikingly full and faithful presentation of the scene and spirit of mediaeval preaching in the age of the revival. The picture will receive some further and vivid touches if we add the *Contes moralisés* of Nicolas Bozon, a collection of some 145 discourses of a later age, probably the early fourteenth century: a plentiful storehouse to illustrate the tale of the rank and file of Franciscan preachers of other generations as well as of his own. Hugh Latimer in a later age, though no lover of the friars, would have found in the pithy and homely Bozon, if we may judge by the sermons of both, a fellow and friend after his own heart.

Of the earliest age of the friars Bishop Creighton has said that 'their preaching was at first of a very crude description—of the same kind as goes on at a Methodist revival in an English village'; and as a broad generalization the description may stand, though probably a closer knowledge of village Methodism would have led the writer to some useful qualifications of his parallel.

When we turn to the sources indicated above, and study mediaeval preaching in the light of its early documents, we are on safer ground—above all, when we seek its noblest type in Francis himself. Within a century of the saint's

death, Cavalca, a Dominican, popularizing Bonaventura's official biography, reproduces for us the scene in words we here translate from his Italian version. 'Then commenced the man of God —a lover of the perfection of the Gospel — to invite and call every man to penitence even as God instructed and taught him. Nor were his words vain, or subject for laughter or jest, but were words full of the Holy Spirit, and entered the marrow of the bones, so that they who heard him were moved and affected by his preaching. . . . And as for his disciples, more prayed they with their heart and mind than with their words, and in the place of books they looked always into the book of the Cross of Christ, day and night praying to God, and thinking on the Passion of Christ, as taught by Francis. For he often spake to them of the Cross of Christ, and preached to them that they were built on Christ and on His Passion, who suffered death for all sinners and redeemed them from eternal death. . . . And after these things the pastor of this little flock, which were twelve brethren, led them to St. Maria di Porziuncula, where he commenced the order of Friars Minor. And there the blessed Francis became the herald and preacher of the gospel of Christ, and went and sent through towns and villages announcing the gospel and the

**Mediaeval Preaching**
**(a) St. Francis**

kingdom of eternal life to all the people, not with learned words of human wisdom, but rather by the power of the Holy Ghost. To those who beheld him he appeared to be a man of another world, who with face and mind and eyes ever regarded heaven attentively, like unto a man which ever strove to draw all peoples to God. Whence commenced to spring the germs of gracious savour in the garden of Christ and to grow fragrant flowers and abundant fruit, for the warmth of the preaching of Francis kindled many men and women with the love of God. . . . To all he rendered himself benign, and a servant for the love of Christ, and reputed not him to be a friend of God who strove not to procure the recovery of souls to salvation, and nothing was to be put before the salvation of souls. This was the only true aim of his brethren and disciples. He (said the saint) is to be bewailed as a man without compassion who preaches to please others or to win praise and not to this end. When he preached himself he was so ardent that he appeared to all to be veritably an angel of God.'

Once, we are told, being called to preach before the Pope and Cardinals, he prepared in more studious and laboured fashion, in order to please his Cardinal protector and sponsor, but remembered not anything when he was summoned to speak. Whereupon he confessed all that had befallen him; and then, invoking the

aid of the Spirit, he received such fullness of understanding and efficacy of speech that his hearers were moved to devotion and compunction of mind. 'And it appeared not to be he who spake, but the Holy Ghost, since that which he preached was revealed in him by works as by word.' So, too, we read, 'He spoke to and reproved prudently the great as well as the lowly, and as joyously preached to a few as to the many and great.' He prefaced every sermon, says Thomas of Celano, with the words, 'the Lord give you peace,' and thus, 'peace he did ever most devoutly proclaim to men and women: wherefore many who had been haters alike of peace and of salvation, became children of peace and zealots of eternal salvation.' Yet he had also a ministry of admonition so that 'men were smitten by his presence with wholesome fear, for, incapable of caressing the faults of certain men, he could pierce them, and, incapable of showing favour to the lives of sinners, he could smite them with sharp reproof. . . . Truly an excellent craftsman, after whose pattern, rule, and teaching, heralded with noteworthy proclamation, Christ's Church is being renewed.' As for his style of speech, 'although he preached to the unlearned in homely and simple language, knowing as he did that power is more needed than words, yet among spiritual men and those of greater capacity his utterances were life-giving and profound. He would hint

in a few words at what was unspeakable, and mingling ardent gestures and movements with his words he transported his hearers wholly to heavenly things.' According to the same witnesses the words of others were remembered, but the words alone of Francis's preaching vanished quickly from memory, the power and influence remained for ever.

Two sentences contain the open secret of his influence: 'He deemed not himself a friend of Christ unless he loved the souls that Christ loved'; and, 'It was by deed, father, that thou didst discourse most sweetly, persuade most readily, prove most surely' (Thomas of Celano).

Such testimonies, breathing the very spirit of the age of Francis, enable us, better than any cold summary or dry analysis, to appreciate the appeal of the mediaeval preacher. Out of all there emerge for us the cardinal subject and moving spirit of the Franciscan message—the 'programme of Christianity,' taught again to the world, after long forgetfulness, in the very words of Christ at Nazareth, and in the very fervour of Pentecostal days. Add to this apostolic fervour and Gospel message the Christ-like charity of this lover of souls, and we are thus brought nearer to the vital fact and moving force of the revival than by any hoarded record or verbal relics of the sermons of its evangelists. 'If the strength of love made him a brother to the other creatures, it is no wonder if Christian

charity made him more than a brother to those who have been stamped with the Creator's image. . . . Love was the Orphean lute he played upon, sending such sweet melody into the world that its strains have not yet died away.' Fra santi il più santo, e tra i peccatori quasi di loro ('Among saints the holiest, and among sinners as if one of themselves').

To his followers he gave counsels of like character. 'The preacher should first draw in by secret prayer what he is afterwards to pour forth in sacred discourse; he must rather grow hot within than utter cold words outwardly. . . . Let the ministers of God's words apply themselves to spiritual studies and not be shackled by other duties. For they were chosen by a great King to deliver to the people the decrees they had heard at His mouth. Such preachers he loved not as desired to be praised for orators rather than as preachers. They too allot their time ill who spend all on discoursing and none on devotion. Why boast these of men converted by them when it is rather the simple brethren who have converted them by their prayers?' For the saint himself 'his safest haven was prayer; not prayer for one moment, not vacant nor presumptuous prayer, but long continued, full of devotion, calm and humble; if he began late he scarce ended with morning.'

As was Francis, so were his companions of

predilection; the generous Bernard, the simple Leo, the grotesque Juniper, the pithy and sarcastic Giles, the handsome Masseo; the portrait of the founder may stand for the type to which, more or less closely, the disciple conformed. Animated by the one spirit, their temperaments are as varied as those of our own early Methodist preachers — the contrasts as sharp as that e.g. between John Nelson and Thomas Walsh; but one ideal inspires the primitive band. In all this school we note a golden mean, as far removed on the one hand from slavish devotion to minutiae of ritual and doctrine as on the other hand it is remote from the common and popular invective against the Church and the clergy. Two hundred years after Francis, Bernardino of Siena, in whom the best traditions of the order revived, passed through the regions of Italy bearing Jesus (says an old chronicler), and in Umbria, on the very scene of Francis's labours, re-enacted his double rôle of peacemaker to the cities and of evangelist to the people. We find him lamenting the fact that after attacking crying abuses the preacher need only say a single word against the clergy for all his censures on sinners to be forgotten. However bored by the sermon, however chilled by cold or fretted by heat, his hearers became impervious to hunger or thirst at an utterance

**(b) Early Franciscans and Bernardino of Siena**

of scorn or invective against prelates and priests —it fell like refreshing dew on such ready soil. In this true son of St. Francis, bringing back the primitive simplicity and directness of preaching to an age touched by a semi-pagan renascence and by the scholastic spirit, we are able to trace the preacher at work alike in the study and in the street. Two versions of Bernardino's sermons exist, an edition in five volumes in Latin, and a collection in the vulgar tongue, recorded from the preacher's lips by an apt and intelligent hearer, and carrying us to the very heart of the subject in their free and familiar appeal. The one series is little more than a preacher's note-book of carefully-studied and elaborately-ordered dissertations, a scholar's stock-in-trade of themes and outlines for his discourses; the other is the actual message as it reached the ears and touched the hearts of his countrymen, spoken in their own tongue and animated by the passion and ardour of the apostle's spirit. Here we find all the notes of popular and powerful preaching—fervent appeal, imaginative flights, rousing exhortation, and withal a homely and colloquial directness throughout.

The true Franciscans added to their many virtues the rare grace of willingness to remain unknown. The tradition is therefore of the order rather than the individual, both in the general ministry of charitable service and in

the specific rôle of preaching. In both we may accept as just the estimate of a modern writer (himself a friar) that democratic freedom, and devotion to the person of Christ — the best elements of the world spirit and of the religious spirit of that time—were the essential Franciscan temper and the notes of its early days. No political programme, but deep personal and spiritual conviction, is the prevailing motive alike of their poverty and of their preaching; and there is little to remind us, save by contrast, of the fiery and tempestuous eloquence of the Dominican Savonarola, the noble prophet to another hour, with other solutions of its needs.

**(c) The Later School**

**1. Bozon**

A different school meets us when we come to the *Contes Moralisés* of Nicolas Bozon and to the manuals issued for the general use of the friars in their itinerant evangelism. In Bozon especially we have to make allowance for the wide diffusion of the orders in the course of a century, for their recognized part and place in the organized life of the Church, and for the inevitable loss as well as gain in that development. In England, in 1272, less than fifty years after their entry on this field of work, the Minorites have already fifty convents and 1,750 brethren; and by the time of Nicolas the first and second generation had wholly passed away. But we see in him a man honest and wholesome,

who, with all the signs of his own age upon him, is essentially faithful through all outward changes to the inward and the primitive spirit of his order—a type of the friar who fills a considerable place in the annals of its earliest days. We find in his sermons pungent and pithy phrases, homely and familiar tales brought from many quarters, a profusion of texts and a sprinkling of proverbs and jests, all serving the moral and spiritual appeal of the preacher to the poorest and vilest of his hearers. We miss indeed in the fourteenth-century preacher the vision and the passion, the mystic charm and the glowing ardour of the apostolate of Francis, of Antony, of Bonaventura: the prosaic Englishman of this age is very different from the poetic Italian of a century before him; but he is not an unworthy son of Francis, nor an unprofitable type of the popular preacher of the mediaeval revival.

**2. 13th-Century Manuals**

So too the thirteenth-century manuals cast their interesting sidelight on some phases of this early evangelistic work. The author of one is unknown to us by name, but he is an English Franciscan whose *Liber Exemplorum ad usum Praedicantium* is a preacher's 'commonplace book' of stock subjects with edifying illustrations and examples; a forerunner of the 'clerical helps' of our own day. The book has two sections: (1) Of things

above (2), of things below; the first including chapters on Christ, the Virgin, the angels, &c.; the second dealing, under many subdivisions, with such subjects as 'accidie,'[1] avarice, confession, love to God and men, faith, humility, &c. It closes abruptly halfway through its alphabetic order of subjects. The compiler has drawn his store from sermons and studies (not too liberal), and from experiences and conversations in a fraternity which had a lore of its own as full and as free to all its members as that of the Methodist brotherhood to-day. He never mentions Francis, nor does he allude to Franciscan legends—probably, as Dr. Little suggests, because he seeks to make his manual profitable among the Dominicans no less than with the brethren of his own rule.

The 'examples' are a curious reflection of the religious creed and temper of the age—we find in them the characteristic mediaeval thought of the Virgin as the 'mother mild' who assuages the severity of her son (an idea to which in a later generation Michael Angelo gives striking expression in the Sistine 'Last Judgement'), but other passages suggest another and worthier conception of the mind of Christ. He treats

[1] *Vide* Paget's *Spirit of Discipline.*—Introductory Essay—for a full and suggestive account of the old but not obsolete sin (or disease) of accidie (sadness and slackness of soul).

also of demons and of diabolical appearances with a credence and a realism not unlike—though more excessive than—the traditional faith of Martin Luther in these ghostly antagonists of the soul. The mixed morals of the time and school are reflected in the story of a thief who devoutly adores the Virgin before going forth to his business and is rewarded by her aid and succour in extreme peril, for when he comes to the gallows he is held up by her for two days, and rescued alive, to become an exemplary Christian and monk. A passion for edification at all costs is the dominant note of this curious book, which does not give too exalted a notion of the common stock of the thirteenth-century evangelist, but no doubt many of the rank and file of the preachers were as superior to some of their 'helps to sermonizing' as we may hope their successors are to-day. The compiler is lacking neither in caution nor courage. He counsels reserve in stories reflecting on the monks when speaking to the common people; but plain dealing and the unaltered tale when the monks themselves are the audience. Let the preacher also avoid allusion to 'burning questions' of recent political and national controversy, and let him use general terms instead of particular names, when such names are apt to be standards of strife ('Caveat qui haec legit ne unquam nomen principis memorati exprimere in hoc exemplo publice presumat'). Some of

these mediaeval counsels are not wholly inept for our modern days.

The other of these manuals, *De Eruditione Praedicatorum*, is by the Dominican, Hubert de Romanis (d. 1277), and moves on a higher plane. Hubert instructs and exhorts his brethren to travel incessantly in their evangelistic ministry, and never to disquiet themselves for bed or lodging. Some indeed there were who turned aside from places where they might do most good to those which offered them the best asylum; and some have been imperilled by too generous hospitality and too rich repasts offered when the preacher's day was done. Diligent study is enforced on the friars, but above all let them look to the end of learning in the salvation of souls. He points to the example of Christ, who, when He had once commenced preaching, spent all his days in that employment. Let all display of ingenuity and eloquence be shunned, and every device provocative more of derision than of edification.

It was much to say in that hour, as the Dominican here says, 'Of the Latin Liturgy the laity understand nothing, but they can understand the sermon, and hence by preaching God is glorified in a clearer and more open manner than by any other act of worship.'

Such counsels as these are not from the friars only, but from members of the older orders also. Elinand of the Cistercian order (d. 1237),

a noble preacher himself, speaks of three species of orators: some addressing themselves to the purse, some to the ear, but few are those who speak to the heart; and the Abbot Guibert, writing on preaching, says, 'Let the sermon be preceded by prayer: so that the soul fired with divine love may utter forth what it feels of God with glowing words, and that the preacher, as he burns in his own heart, may enkindle a flame also in the heart of his hearers.'

It is in such words as these, above all in the spontaneous and supreme expression of such ideals in the practice of Francis and his true disciples, that we find the source and spring of the mediaeval revival: it is there that we see the genius of this movement by which to the strife and sin of warring cities and of weary hearts there came the peace and gladness of God, the hope and power of the gospel; it was thus that thirteenth-century Italy saw fulfilled again in the disciples of Christ the words first spoken of the primitive age of the Church, 'they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.'

**Mediaeval Preaching and the Revival**

# CHAPTER IV

## *SINGERS OF THE REVIVAL*

You have to understand this most deeply of all Christian minstrels, from first to last; that they are more musical, because more joyful, than any others on earth: ethereal minstrels, pilgrims of the sky, true to the kindred points of heaven and home; their joy essentially the skylark's, in light, in purity; but, with their human eyes, looking for the glorious appearing of something in the sky, which the bird cannot.—*Ruskin.*

THE most recent and best of Bunyan biographers has told us that it is a test of religion that genius is not only able to live with it but is necessarily transformed by it. . . . It increases the value of the whole man; it deepens love, it exalts the stature, and adds force to every faculty.' This is pre-eminently true of 'the renascence of wonder' in spiritual things, 'the wonder, why such love to me?' for with it there comes the quickening and exalting of the powers of expression; song and poetry are the natural language of the supernatural life. So every great revival has found its record and left its legacy, not only in its journals and confessions, its history and

**'The Renascence of Wonder'**

biography, read and known by the few for an age, but also in psalms and hymns, loved and sung by the many through successive eras of the Church. The same breath of God which has given 'beauty for ashes' to the earth has filled with melody the silent air. Grace has no songless and no flowerless springs.

No ampler illustration can be offered than in this thirteenth-century chapter of religious history. As we have seen already, to Francis an almost paradoxical influence was accorded over the language and literature of his land; this comparatively unlettered man has been one of the founders of a new age of learning as of religion, for the vernacular literature of Italy dates from his century, and receives richly from his impress on the affection and imagination of his countrymen. The late twelfth century had witnessed the creation of a national idiom by the meeting and fusion of many provincial dialects, following on the confederation of the cities and the commerce between the communes; the early fourteenth century would see the fixing of its literary form in the noble mould of Dante's *Divine Commedia*.[1] Midway between these epochs Francis arose to give a more sacred inspiration

**(a) St. Francis**
**1. Literary Influence**

[1]Not less important than the influence of Dante is that of Boccaccio in this moulding of the Italian language to its noble and abiding literary form.

and a richer value to the language by its use on his lips as the vehicle of religious thought and feeling. The impassioned discourse, the exuberant song, which sprang from his overflowing heart, found free course and full expression in the tongue of the people as he spake in the streets and chanted by the wayside the love and grace of God to men. Even as the genius of the Florentine poet found or formed the common idiom to the use and purpose of his noble imagination, so the Umbrian preacher fashioned and informed it to the ends of spiritual emotion and appeal.

**2. Poetic Influence and Expression**

But it is above all with the distinctively poetic element in the work of Francis and his disciples that we are now concerned. It is true, as Ozanam has said, that 'poetry is everywhere in the heroic times of the order. . . . The genius of the penitent of Assisi broke forth on every side . . . After his death his spirit continued to preside in the meetings of the order, in these festivals of poverty, in this school of the divine love, where were found crowds readily affected, imaginations free from worldly cares: in a word, everything of which poetic inspiration has need in order to extend and diffuse itself.' To this day fragrance exhales from the *Fioretti* or 'Little Flowers,' the golden book of the words and deeds of the saint, and music breathes

through every accent of these early tales and traditions of the order. It would have been strange indeed if one imbued as few have been by birth and nurture with the spirit of poetry, one, moreover, whose life itself was a poem, had left no legacy of song, no hymn or chant so 'written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die.' An early and gracious legend tells us that one evening the saint, being touched to tears by the song of a nightingale, felt himself inspired to respond, and thus, far into the night, they chanted alternately the praises of God; till, wearying before the bird, Francis gave honour to the singer who had vanquished him in the loving strife. But the notes of the human minstrel have outlived his rival songster, and survive for us in lyrics of spiritual love where the accent of the saint may still be heard.

**Mission of the Poets of the Revival**

The canticles of this era had a double mission to fulfil: the singers of the revival enriched their age with songs that would be at once a substitute for the love chants of the troubadours and a supplement to the Latin hymns of the Church. As already noted, the period of Francis is also that of Frederic of Sicily, in whose luxurious court there flourished a school of poetry 'where the gallantry of the Provençals is blended with the ardent passions of the East.' From that Sicilian

source there springs, in Ozanam's words, 'the too abundant stream which we see pouring forth in the culpable narratives of Boccaccio, and in that soft and voluptuous literature which ended by enervating alike character and intellect, and by habituating Italian youth to spend its days at the knees of women, in forgetfulness of fatherland and liberty.' So too the nobler and purer stream of a divine poetry, which rolls its full tides in Dante's verse, finds its spring not only in the early Tuscan singers whom he hails as masters, but also, 'mounting higher, upon another point of Italy where is found something similar to what is seen in Sicily, another re-union of men inspired under a powerful master, and, finally, that concourse of great causes without which there are no great effects.' From Francis erstwhile troubadours, like Fra Pacifico, learned to seek the veritable sources of poetry elsewhere than in the commonplaces of the Provençal 'gay science,' elsewhere than in the reminiscences of classic mythology; even in the depth of the human heart, in this 'the inexhaustible source of the conscience moved by faith and by repentance.'

In the saint there glowed a holy flame not less ardent than the fires of a profaner love, and his impassioned heart sought utterance beyond the scope of speech. 'He adds to the word, gives it the poetic sweep, lends to it rhythm and chant like two wings. . . . For when the

name of the Saviour Jesus came upon his lips he could not proceed; his voice changed as if he had heard an inner melody of which he willed to catch the notes.' The experience of the mystic is one in every school, in his exalted hours 'touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he breaks'; of St. Paul a penetrating student says that whenever the windings of his thought bring him within sight of the Cross, he breaks forth into doxology; Bunyan's pilgrim at the Cross gave three leaps for joy and went on singing:

**Rapture and Song**

> Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be
> The Man that there was put to shame for me.

Charles Wesley, when his heart too is 'strangely warmed,' sings his new found joy, and henceforth will write his hymns on the slightest provocation. The poet of the *Christian Year* will paraphrase the lyric of an earthly love and say:

> There's not a strain to memory dear,
> Nor flower in classic grove,
> There's not a sweet note warbled here,
> But minds us of Thy love.

So the glad impulse which filled the spirit of the thirteenth-century evangelists touched their lips at once with the power of prophecy and the sweetness of song; they too could say—'Love makes us all poets,'

The one assured—or at least generally accepted—fragment of Francis's poetic work is little other than a transcript and anticipation of the verse of Keble quoted above. 'The Canticle of the Sun and of the Creatures' is too well known to need lengthy citation here: it has stirred the author of *Essays in Criticism* to unwonted warmth and unaccustomed praise in such a field, and his translation of the poem adds value to his appreciation of the saint. We give here a few stanzas only, as Arnold's lines (or other versions of the Canticle) are easily accessible to all our readers ('Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment,' *Essays, First series*.)

**Canticle of the Sun**

O most high, almighty good Lord God, to Thee belong praise, glory, honour, and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord God with all His creatures; and specially our brother the sun, who brings us the day, and who brings us the light; fair is he, and shining with a very great splendour: O Lord, he signifies to us Thee! . . .

Praised be my Lord for our brother fire, through whom Thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty, and strong! . . .

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon one another for His love's sake, and who endure weakness and tribulation; blessed are they who peaceably shall endure, for Thou, O most Highest, shalt give them a crown! . . .

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the death of the body, from whom no man escapeth. Woe to him

who dieth in mortal sin! Blessed are they who are found walking by Thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.

Another poem, attributed to Francis by Bernardino of Siena, is rather of Franciscan inspiration than directly from the saint. But it breathes his spirit so fully that Ozanam, in a less critical age than our own, has accepted the tradition and attributed the song to the season of the stigmata, when the *poverello* was kindled and quickened by such close and costly fellowship with Christ.

**Canticle of the Furnace**

Love has put me in the furnace—in the furnace of love; the loving Lamb has cleft my heart, I have fallen to the earth, his arrows have pierced me. I am broken in my body and am as a dead man without feeling; dead, not by death itself, but by excess of joy. Then, returned to myself, I am strong and can follow my guides who lead me to the court of heaven. Yea, from the beginning Christ has loved me with a veritable love, and now my heart is become capable of the consolations of Christ. . . . Love has put me in the furnace, he has put me in the furnace of love.

So in ardent stanzas, for which we must seek an early parallel in the scriptural 'Song of Songs,' or a later analogy in the unchastened muse of Moravian hymnology, this passionate pilgrim sings his plaint of heavenly love in involutions and repetitions of phrase around his unchanging theme.

It is probably, however, to Jacopone da Todi,

> That son of Italy who tried to blow,
> Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,

that this 'Canticle of the Furnace,' and a longer poem, 'The Canticle of Love,' sometimes ascribed to Francis, are to be attributed. To him also reverts the much higher fame of the 'Stabat Mater,' if indeed, in the maze of criticism on this great Latin hymn, we hold any sure clue to its authorship. The long and learned account both of the 'Stabat mater dolorosa' and of the sequence, 'Stabat mater speciosa,' in Dr. Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* will give the curious reader all the detail he can desire on this vexed question. The balance of evidence leaves to Jacopone the authorship, not only of this monumental chant, but also of many smaller but precious poems, some in the Latin, some in the Italian tongue. One of these, 'The Canticle of Love,' is a fervent and animated dialogue between Christ and the Soul, in which the Saviour reproves the tumult and the transports of the ardent disciple.

**(b) Jacopone da Todi**

All things which I have created were formed with number and measure, all are ordered unto their end.[1]

[1]Doubtless, like Wesley's free translation of Scheffler's hymn—'In number, weight, and measure still, Thou sweetly orderest all that is'—a reminiscence of the Book of Wisdom.

It is order which conserves their value, and charity, more than any other, has need of regulation. Art thou, then, O Soul, become insensate by thine ardour? Thou art out of rule and thy fervour is unbridled.

The world thinks to win me back, even as do the friends who are out of this way of love. But he who has once yielded himself cannot give himself anew, the serf cannot be lord . . . I would love more, but I can give no more than myself, my heart is as molten wax, and the figure of Christ is there traced . . . for to be invested of Christ I am divested of self. O Christ, Thou hast ravished my heart, and Thou tellest my soul to restrain its love! How, since I am changed into Thee, can I remain master of myself! Even as the iron reddened in the fire, as the air illumined by the rays of the sun, lose their forms and wear another figure, so changes wholly the pure soul vested with Thy love. O Love, Love, draw me towards thy beauty, O Love, Love, disdain me not: Thou art my life, remove not thyself from me since Thou hast made me languish for love.

But the life of Jacopone is yet more impregnated with the Franciscan spirit than are his chants. Its central and critical incident is the theme or text of one of Matthew Arnold's shorter poems ('Austerity of Poetry.'). Born in 1228, just after the death of Francis, the son of a notary of noble family in Todi (then a powerful Umbrian city), Jacopo followed his father in the study and profession of the law. A brilliant, if somewhat boisterous, course as a student at Bologna was followed by a success-

**1. Conversion and Vocation**

ful legal career in his native town. There in 1267 he brought his bride, also of noble family, and secure as it seemed in happiness and fortune, entered as a prominent and prosperous citizen into the full tide of his commune's busy life. From his student days he had found expression for his exuberant nature, not only in the pomps and pranks of his comrades, but also in a fluent vein of poetry and song, even to the point of ribaldry and parody of religious chants and ritual.

The more serious cares of life, and above all, the devout and gracious influence of his wife, had already checked the excesses of his overflowing spirit when, in 1268, the crisis of life came to him in a tragic sorrow. Only a few months after his marriage (though hardly 'in his light youth,' as Arnold says, but a graver man of forty) he joined in a civic festival, where his young wife, with her friends, gazed from a stage upon the spectacle. Suddenly the wooden floor gave way; Giovanna was carried, dying, from the crowd to a quiet room, and there, beneath her festal robes, Jacopo discovered the penitential garb, the secret austerity hidden beneath the pomp she had practised only for his pleasure. For a season the bereaved man lost his reason, Jacopo gave place to the depreciative nickname of Jacopone, and when he returned to comparative sanity it was to a freakishness of humour and a simplicity of

conduct which retained for him this lasting sign of the fool of Christ—Jacopone he remained through life and in history. Some eighteen years later he became a Franciscan brother, one of the truest followers of the saint, a living protest against the increasing laxity of the order. Many of his songs or lauds are written under the constraint of sorrow and shame for the degeneracy of the brethren of his rule. 'I weep,' he cries, 'because Love is not loved.' His satires, succeeding to the smoother love songs of his earlier days, were instinct with a ready wit and couched in a direct speech which won for them a speedy welcome and a widespread circulation among the common people.

**2. Songs and Poems**

But it was not the scourge and satire of his verse that gave to the poet his most lasting and honoured fame. Long years of strife with his self-indulgent brethren, cruel persecution by Boniface the Pope, seem but to have softened and sweetened his spirit. He sings of the beauty and gladness of creation, the glory and goodness of the Creator, in the very vein of Francis and the 'Canticle of the Sun.' On his death-bed (in 1306) his 'swan song' is of the love of Christ:

> O Love Divine, Thy wounds
> With which Thou woundest me,
> Forbid all other sounds
> But praise, O Love, to Thee . . .

Jesu, Thou art my all;
I lose myself in Thee.
Jesu my Love I call,
My hope eternally.

All his generous and rich spiritual nature seems to utter itself in such lines as—

God does not lodge in narrow heart:
Love claims the whole and spurns the part;
Great-hearted one, where'er thou art,
Thou shelterest Deity.

He sings continually, with the poet of another race and of a later age, but on a yet higher plane:

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

'O Love,' again he cries, 'Divine Love, why besiegest thou me? Thou hast set siege before my five gates. If I go forth by sight, all which I see is love, and if I go forth by the gate of hearing to find peace, what signify sounds for me? it is still Thee, O Lord, and all which I hear speaks only of love. . . . O Christ, lay Thy hand upon me and draw me from the sea to the shore. Why hast Thou so suffered? Because Thou hast willed to save.'

And as he ascends to the heights in these chants of love, so in his hymns of penitence he descends to the depths. Bunyan's Wet-Eyes and Desires-Awake, 'men of a broken spirit, yet that could speak well to a petition,' are anticipated in

Jacopone's plaints. The repentant soul, remembering its celestial origin and primal beauty, breaks forth into tears, and is assured, 'O tears, to you appertain power and royalty. You depart alone to appear before the judge and no fear retards you. Never will you fruitless return; by humility you vanquish majesty, and enchain the all-powerful God.'

**3. Rank and Influence**

The historian of the Franciscan poets has not paid too lavish a tribute to this son of Francis in according him a foremost place and the fullest treatment among all the sacred singers of his age and order. We cite Ozanam's judgement at the risk of spoiling his tribute by translation. 'The scourge of the poetry of the troubadours was the common-place: the flowers, the spring, the dames celebrated by hearsay, and love chanted by those who did not love. Imaginations reduced to live by borrowing had recourse to the recollections of mythology; and the son of Venus, with his bow and arrows, came to the help of the spent-out poets. Jacopone, on the contrary, has horror of the common-place. He imitates nothing except it be the canticles of Francis and the first Franciscans, but he surpasses them greatly by the number and the variety of his compositions. He no longer draws from the profane fountains of the old Parnassus, but at the spring of tears, from the

inexhaustible vein of sorrow and repentance.' 'The impetuosity of his feeling passes wholly into his style and gives to it its flight. Before him the wings of Italian poesy are seen to be shooting forth, but they await him for their unfurling. . . . As a theological poet Jacopone dared, the first of the moderns, to demand from Christian metaphysics not truths only to instruct men, but beauties also to ravish them; no longer lessons, but songs. Science . . . reascending the current of secondary truths, travels towards the first source of the true, where is also the source of the beautiful. Jacopone knew these paths; he has explored the abysses and the heights of the infinite.'

**(c) Fra Pacifico**

Of Fra Pacifico, once a leader in this sacred choir of Franciscan song, there survives no certain fragment in poetic form, except it be in Francis's 'Canticle of the Sun,' attributed by ancient tradition to him (in its finished form) as musical editor for the saint. He left indeed a monument of verse, but 'scorned to blot it with a name.' This chief of the minstrels of God—styled in the world the king of verse, the whilom troubadour of the Sicilian court, to whom was decreed the poetic crown—had entered the order of Francis, won by the preaching of the saint, humbling himself from the very summit of his secular glory and fame. 'He felt himself pierced with the sword of the divine word, and, re-

nouncing the pomps of the world, he cast himself at the feet of the blessed father, who gave him the habit of the order and the name of Brother Pacifico because he saw him converted from the disquietude of the world to the peace of Christ.' He became a 'man of affairs,' provincial minister in France, but ceased not to use in the service of Christ his rich and natural gifts of verse and song. But here—as has been suggested, probably from motives of expiation—'he hid his genius in some of those anonymous canticles so common in the Middle Ages, even as he had hidden his laurel-crowned brow beneath the Franciscan hood.'

A little known but characteristic figure is Bianco of Siena, a singer of a later day. He is one of the minor poets of the prolific school of sacred song, a type therefore of a precious group whose voices filled the air with melody, as their virtues and graces adorned the earth with beauty and perfumed it with fragrance in this renascence and springtide of spiritual life. He was one of the disciples of the Tuscan revival of the fourteenth century, a Florentine, early resident in Siena, who sought in his youth admission to the order of Jesuates, newly founded by Colombini, a Sienese successor of St. Francis. Repelled at first as too young and too delicate for the austerities and privations of an itinerant life, his imploring prayers

(d) **Bianco of Siena**

prevailed, and won for him not only a welcome to the order, but the fervent affection of its founder, to whom he became as a son in the gospel. Thus he commenced the pilgrimage which led him 'at its beginning to Viterbo and afterwards to heaven.' He brought to the little band an ardour of love and a gaiety of spirit which found ceaseless expression in songs and hymns, celebrating by the wayside and in the market-places the name and praise of Christ. 'One feels,' says the French biographer of Colombini, 'a breath of Paradise running through this poesy, which, with its loving repetitions and lingerings, has an inexpressible charm.' In him, as in all these southern singers of the Middle Ages, we have to remember, in our colder clime and less romantic days, the sensuous and impassioned temperament, the free and emotional expression of the meridional races.

The soul—in the verses we quote from Bianco—converses with Christ and with Love, the mediating messenger. 'Go, Love, and render thanks for me to my well-beloved. Tell Him that never was snow so cold as is my heart when He withdraws. Tell Him that I will, and ardently desire, a grace of Him, to suffer martyrdom for His love—death without this favour cannot suffice.' Christ answers, 'Tell her, messenger beloved, tell My chosen one to fear nothing, for I am her final peace. I have made her

so fair that she shines above every star. Let her learn to suffer for My love and look to Me who for her willed to die upon the Cross, and so shall her suffering be sweet. And there, where I dwell in My glory, will I give to her eternal rest. Return, and what I have said to thee tell her joyously.'

'*Tell her joyously*'—the watchword of the revival sounds in that phrase. Preachers and poets—these messengers of grace and goodwill—carried with them in the accent of their speech and song the gladness of the gospel, the zest and rapture of the more abundant life. So also the spirit of the gospel rules the form and fashion of their appeal, the self-chosen obscuring of their glory, the abnegation of their pride, that they might reach the masses of the people with the message of their Lord. Of many of these singers of the revival whose life-story and poetic utterance have reached us only in fragments—flotsam and jetsam of a once rich argosy—it may be safely said that not only in the self-suppression of their name, but also in their self-sacrifice of fame, they have merited the tribute paid them by their best historian. 'Orthodoxy had no dogmas too precise, mysticism professed no doctrines too bold, no sentiments too elevated, to take the form of popular chant in order to descend to the multitude. But the authors

**The Watchword of the Revival**

of this attempt were more careful for the edification of others than for their own glory.'

Many of them—once the idle singers of an empty day—stooped from their golden pomp of verse to simpler styles and humbler measures of song; they could have said, with greater truth and force than Isaac Watts of his hymns in another age, 'if the verse appears so gentle and flowing as to incur the censure of feebleness, I may affirm that sometimes it cost me labour to make it so'; they too had their rich and full reward in giving to the common heart of man the language of his prayer and praise in his sacred and exalted hours of life and death; and they also knew and proved the highest and the holiest truth and meaning of the poet's faith that

> Wisdom is ofttimes nearer when we stoop
> Than when we soar.

**Latin Hymnologists: Thomas of Celano**

PS. Such writers as Bonaventura, of the order of Francis, and Aquinas, of the order of Dominic, belong as sacred poets to the ranks of Latin hymnology rather than to the vernacular singers of the revival. The same is true of the biographer of Francis, Thomas of Celano, whose *Dies Irae* is a poetic legacy not less precious and much more famous than his prose lives

of the saint. Of this hymn no less than 133 English and American renderings alone are recorded by Dr. Julian—two of these finding a place in the Methodist collection (Nos. 844-845). Few men have left, in two realms of literature, so rich a bequest to the Church as this thirteenth-century Franciscan friar.

## CHAPTER V

### *WOMEN OF THE REVIVAL*

Then in her sacred saving hands
She took the sorrows of the lands,
With maiden palms she lifted up
The sick time's blood-embittered cup,
And in her virgin garment furled
The faint limbs of a wounded world.

. . . . . .

And shields were lowered, and snapt were spears,
And sweeter-tuned the clamorous years.

*Swinburne* on *St. Catherine.*

THE briefest account of the religious movement of the Middle Ages—as of any era of spiritual renascence—cannot omit some record of, or reference to, the part of women as subjects and servants of its redeeming mission in the world. The traces of this action of the revival, of its influence over the character and through the ministry of mediaeval womanhood, are found, not only in the calendar of saints, nor chiefly

**The Revival and Mediaeval Womanhood**

in the legends of the orders, but in the chronicles which reflect the popular life and tell the tale of the common day. If, in these gracious hours of history, a brighter lustre was given to the resplendent souls who in their fame of virtue 'shine aloft, like stars,' no less is it true that a richer fragrance was wakened in the humbler and obscurer lives, 'scattered at the feet of man, like flowers.' No record indeed is needed, though many are found, to tell us that a religious quickening which profoundly affected many countries, and touched several centuries with its spirit, would find its trophies and tokens in every stratum of society, in every stage of culture, in every phase of personal and political, of social and spiritual, life and influence. The great gift of religion, the sense of a vocation delivering life from tyranny and from triviality, worked out its divine impulse in holy women alike through the cloister and the hearth. For them, even more than for the men of their age, it changed earthly values and redeemed earthly conditions by giving them relation to higher and to heavenly ends—they found in it the sense of a mission, that aim in life which, as a modern writer tells us, is the only fortune worth the finding.

In a noble passage, which begins with Wordsworth and ends with Catherine of Siena, Pater does justice to one aspect of this trans-

forming influence and to its issues in a character fully subject to its sway. Speaking of 'impassioned contemplation' as a perfect end with Wordsworth, he reminds us that to higher or to lower ends the majority of 'men move too often with something of a sad countenance, with hurried and ignoble gait, becoming, unconsciously, something like thorns in their anxiety to bear grapes; it being possible for people, in the pursuit of even great ends, to become themselves thin and impoverished in spirit and temper, thus diminishing the sum of perfection in the world at its very source. . . . We contrast with such dark, mistaken eagerness, a type like that of Saint Catherine of Siena, who made the means to her ends so attractive that she has won for herself an undying place in the House Beautiful, not by her rectitude of soul only, but by its "fairness"—by those quite different qualities which commend themselves to the poet and the artist.'

**'The House Beautiful'**

If, for brevity and clearness in our examples, we have chosen two, and two only, of these mediaeval 'types' of dwellers in the House Beautiful—in this sphere of calm conquest and fretless passion, it is because, in all save their central and vital secret, they offer a contrast of extremes—one a cloistered Franciscan recluse of the morning of the revival, the other,

**Contrasted Types**

of its later hours, a garbed Dominican indeed, but a frequenter of courts and of communes, an ambassador and correspondent of kings and popes. The days of Clare may be said to have passed in the peace of a holy dream, but Catherine's brief life is the course of a weaver's shuttle, traversing swiftly with its golden thread the tragic web of her age. The one, if tradition is to be trusted, the descendant of a noble family, and thus the child of the feudal traditions of old Italian life; the other, a dyer's daughter, springing from the stock of the people and of the race and order of the new day. But less than all contrasts of outward life is the kinship of soul which makes them one, not only with each other, but also with the countless company of women who dwelt within that same many-roomed house of life and proved in various spheres and manifold service the one emancipating and ennobling grace of Christ.

**St. Clare**
**(a) Conversion**

*St. Clare* was born at Assisi in 1194, twelve years after the birth of Francis. As modern critical writers have questioned the tradition of her noble family, it is well that her eloquent and sometimes rhapsodical Italian biographer, though free from doubts on this point, yet adds, 'I know that no merit have we from the gifts of fortune, and that in speaking of the friends of God we need not remount to ancestral glories.' It is certain that she was

won, about her eighteenth year, by the preaching of Francis, to the religious vocation already foreshadowed by austere and ascetic pieties within her father's house. She sought out the saint, and, following alike his counsels and her own inclinations, left her home, and, after shelter for a few days within Benedictine monasteries, was settled by Francis in a poor dwelling near St. Damian, the little chapel once restored by his own hands. Here she found an abiding home and formed a growing order; for Clare was followed by Agnes, her sister, and speedily by other companions, the nucleus of a community of which she became the first head or Abbess.

**(b) Cloister v. Hearth**

The stealth with which she left her home, and the rooted resistance she made to every plea or threat, or sometimes even to physical constraint, from her kinsmen seeking her recovery and return — these things will be differently read and variously judged according to the preconceptions of another and an alien age. The same problem has met us in the crisis of Francis's history, and is there answered for the saint himself—in his conflict between religious duty and social obligation—by the dramatic renunciation of his father's house, and by a claim to a higher kinship, with its call for higher loyalty of obedience. As for Clare and her first comrades, a sympathetic

reader need not share the complacent satisfaction of her biographer in this and in all her actions to feel that, forsaking her father's roof, she is asserting a spiritual right rather than deserting a social duty. It is less the selfish rejection of a lower than the selfless acceptance of a higher lordship of life. For some women at least the mediaeval cloister was the one and only escape from commands and compulsions that did violence to the most intimate and most imperative relation of the soul—its relation to the will of God. It was for them the means whereby the Infinite within them found deliverance from the finite round and about them.

Probably Ruskin's characteristic comment on Giotto's fresco of St. Francis's renunciation will serve for many readers as the last word on the question: 'This scene . . . represents not the child's assertion of his independence, but his adoption of another Father . . . You must not confuse the desire of this boy of Assisi to obey God rather than man with the desire of our young cockney Hopeful to have a latch-key and a separate allowance. No point of duty has been more miserably warped and perverted by false priests in all Churches than this duty of the young to choose whom they will serve. But the duty itself does not the less exist; and if there be any truth in Christianity at all, there will come, for all true disciples, a time when they have to take that saying to

heart, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me."'

From the hour of St. Clare's abandonment of her home to her death, forty-one years afterwards, the tale of her life is that, first, of a gracious friendship, and then of a faithful stewardship; a wise counsellor and ready helper of Francis in the few remaining years of his life, a steadfast and loyal servant of his ideals in the generation of strife that followed his death. In both these periods of her ministry its influence transcends the records left to us of memorable act or striking word. To use the phrase applied to a modern saint, her story is indeed the 'history of a fragrance,' — the prolonged breaking of the vessel of precious ointment at the feet of Christ. 'Something of the vernal fragrance' (says a recent writer) 'which Bonaventura tells us surrounded her in life, still clings to her story, linked as it is so closely with all that is loveliest in mediaeval mysticism. It is truly one of those lives that teach perfection without sacrificing poetry.'

**(c) Friendship with Francis**

It is to the abiding honour of Clare that Francis had recourse to her, not for the consolations only, but for the counsels also of a sacred friendship. The sound good sense which breathes through many of her letters was a marked feature of her spiritual character, and

gave her a commanding influence in the seasons when her judgement was sought. In an hour when Francis was tempted to seek solitude and silence and to forsake his public ministry, she urged him back to the street and to the market-place, saving him from a perilous retreat ere his work was done. Indeed, we rise from contact with this period of Franciscan history conscious that in this friend of the saint we have one who—with many differences—played for him the part that Susanna Wesley fulfilled on more than one occasion in the crises of early Methodist history.

**(d) Monastic Life**

No less remarkable is St. Clare's monastic life when Francis had passed, and a new chapter of the order's history had commenced. We catch glimpses of her in the cloister, now tender and watchful for her sisters, charged with solicitude for the sick and frail, a 'lady of the lamp,' jealous in her vigils to guard her feebler comrades against the rigours of the night; now writing to distant communities wise and sometimes playful letters, which we would fain quote, alike for their spiritual sanity and for their revelation of her character. To herself and to all in authority above her she is stern and inflexible in everything that concerns the purity of the Franciscan ideal and the poverty of the order. She could have said with Pascal, 'I love poverty, because Christ

has loved it.' So through the period of relaxation she refused for herself and for her convent any mitigation of the rule, in which she saw the abiding expression of the founder's ideal. To the Pope, who would have released her from her vows, she answered, 'Absolve me from my sins and not from obedience to my Lord and Saviour.'

It is on the lips of Piccarda, once of the order of the Clares, that Dante puts one of the noblest lines of the *Commedia*, 'His Will is our peace' (Paradise, iii. 85), and no text is truer to the spirit of St. Clare. 'Go,' said she to her soul in her dying hour, 'go without fear, for thou hast a good guide for thy journey . . . and He who created thee has ever watched over thee.'

**St. Catherine (a) Historic Renown**

Of *St. Catherine of Siena* it is difficult to write within small compass by reason of the abundance of incidents and the many-sided influences of her life. Few women of any epoch have found as rich and full expression of their spiritual genius in historic form, in stirring deed and significant word, as this fourteenth-century saint. Her contemporary biographer tells us that 'she was to the fourteenth century what St. Bernard was to the twelfth—that is, the light and support of the Church. At the moment when the bark of St. Peter was most strongly

agitated by the tempest, God gave it for pilot a poor young girl who was concealing herself in the little shop of a dyer'; and her modern biographer indicates her dominant influence by the sub-title of his book, 'A study in the Religion, Literature, and History of the Fourteenth Century in Italy.' She is to-day the ruling spirit among the haunting memories which jostle each other in her city, as she was the ruling personality in its crowded and complex life more than five hundred years ago. She greets us alike in the old frescoes and canvases of the mediaeval Sienese masters, and in the speech of the children and the reverence of the populace of Siena to-day. The authentic tale of her critical historians is more wonderful than the legends of her credulous ecclesiastical biographers. 'Her life is historic, but so surprising that it seems to introduce the miracle into history.' Gebhart, in *Les Origines de la Renaissance en Italie*, hails her as the first statesman of Italy in her century. His summary of her action on the age is so just and apt that we translate and transfer it to our own pages as the briefest and best expression of her place and part in the Church and the State of her day. 'That the orators of Venice, that the ambassadors of Florence, should handle with a dexterous hand the loose threads of state affairs will astonish no one; but that a woman, dreamy and mystical, who sees Christ in ecstasy

and receives the sacred host from the hand of an angel, that she should enterprise the direction of Italian affairs, the ending of the captivity at Avignon, and the leading back of the Pope to Rome; should follow from the depths of her cell all the movements of Italian politics, and (perceiving the dangers of schism, not only to the Church but to the general liberties of the peninsula) should strive to group closely around the Holy See, Florence, Venice, and Naples; that she should correspond in the interests of Christianity with popes and kings, with queens and communes, and finally, should dare for her enterprises the perils of the sea, the weariness of a long journey, and the Florentine risings—such a character and such a life excite some surprise.' The surprise is not less when we remember that she succeeded where 'the two great idealists of the peninsula, Dante and Petrarch, had been lamentably foiled' in a similar effort.

All this secular and political force of life had its spring and source in a profound spiritual experience. Catherine of Siena in the Papal Court, like Joan of Arc in the French camp, works out, no less than Clare of Assisi in her Umbrian cloister, a passionate and personal religious vocation—all are dreamers and diviners whose voices and visions are of celestial origin.

In Catherine the seal of a spiritual calling was set on her earliest years—as a child she had

the distinction of religious genius. Born in 1347, one of the twenty-five children of Jacopo Benincasa, a member of the guild or corporation of dyers, and of Lapa, daughter of an obscure poet, she was a visionary as a child of six. She saw Christ, a glorious and radiant figure, accompanied by St. Peter, St. John, and St. Paul, raising His hand above her to bless her. Like St. Teresa, she wandered off to country solitudes, seeking indeed not early martyrdom, but special miracles from heaven to succour and nourish her in the desert. She continued within her father's house to hold converse with the spiritual world. Her sense of a heavenly vocation was proof against every allurement and inducement to more earthly ties —she desired to be bound only to Christ; and at last, after many trials, her will prevailed against both the urgencies of her father to a secular life and the refusals of the Church to receive her vows. She was accepted and garbed as a daughter of Dominic, though ever claiming Francis as a spiritual father; and her story and clear consciousness of a mission from God gradually communicated itself to her fellow citizens and to her countrymen. She spoke of her calling with an assurance which almost anticipates the words of the Maid of France two generations later. 'God has elected me and set me in the earth to bring remedy to a

**(b) Religious Vocation**

great scandal,' said Catherine, and a spirit of authority asserted itself in this frail girl which made her an unquestioned oracle in the ever-increasing circle of her influence. She read the hearts and penetrated the secrets of those who sought her counsel, even as she divined the mysteries of God's Word. 'There is more danger in being with you when one would hide his sentiments than in navigating on the open sea, for you read all our secrets'; 'You know the pith, I know only the rind of Scripture,' —are the testimonies of her friends to her.

In an age when the fervour and enthusiasm of the Franciscan spirit had died down, when the first love of the friars had long been lost, the citizens of Siena and of Florence saw the reconciling spirit of Francis revive in the young Dominican nun. She cries to the cities and communes, 'Build you on the living foundation, on the gracious Lord Jesus, and mix prayer with all your public acts.' She brought compassion and charity, for contempt and rancour, into the age-long feuds of families and classes and communes, till, as one writer says, 'the great heard her with reverence and the lowly stretched to her their suppliant hands.'

So in her care for the sick, the plague-stricken, the leprous, for all who were out of the pale and under the ban, she revived the tradition of the saint of Assisi. We are reminded of one of the most characteristic of Franciscan

legends, the taming of the fierce wolf of Gubbio, in the story of Nicolas Tuldo, a young Perugian noble condemned to death in Siena for conspiracy, and maddened to blasphemy and raving against God and man. At the touch of Catherine's spirit upon him he is softened, and dies in peace, receiving the fatal stroke in Catherine's arms, smiling on her and murmuring the name of Jesus in his last moment of life.

**(c) Letters**

Her letters are one of the most precious legacies of her age to our own, and one of the noblest revelations of a great and gracious spirit ever given to the world by this type of literature. It is difficult to forbear quotation, but the reader will thank us if the reference sends him to Miss Scudder's selection (published by Dent & Co.) to peruse for himself this manual of wise and brave spiritual counsel. Whether writing to popes and legates—sometimes as another Paul to Timothy, with her oft-repeated exhortation, 'Be a virile man,' 'Be strong and of a good courage'; sometimes as an apostle of love, pleading for spiritual against secular passions, 'God demands souls more than cities'; —or exhorting an egoistic saintliness to practical and unselfish service—'it is no time to stay still or to say, "I shall forfeit my peace" . . . come now out of your wood and make haste to enter the battlefield . . . The spiritual life is quite

too lightly held if it is lost by change of place. . . . When the time comes for the true servant of God to abandon his own consolations and embrace labours for the honour of God he does it';—in all her letters there breathes the ardour of a passionate heart with the wisdom of a sane and strong mind.

But her greatest work—disappointing as it was in its issues—and the supreme instance of her influence over her age, is her deliverance of the Pope from the 'Babylonian captivity' of Avignon and her restoration of the papal court to Italy and Rome. From the day (1305) when Clement V removed the seat of Church authority to France, and established there his court, Rome had been left a prey to the spoiler. The cities of Italy were casting off the irksome yoke of the Church, goaded too often by the folly and cruelty of the papal emissaries. Where statesmen, civil and ecclesiastical alike, had failed to restore the Pope to Rome and peace to the cities, it seemed impossible that a simple nun should succeed; but the miracle was wrought. In 1376 she reached Avignon after corresponding with Gregory XI in terms rarely found in the letters of the saints to the Holy See. Her address to him as her 'most sweet father' does not stay her from most fearless and plain-spoken counsels. 'Choose between the temporal power and the salvation

**(d) Avignon and Rome**

of souls.' 'Better than all the treasures and dominion of the Church are the little sheep of Christ, His flock, the Good Shepherd's one true treasure. Let the minister of Christ come then to his rebellious cities not with the arms of men but with the cross of his Lord.' So too she exhorts Florence and her sister towns to yield themselves to the Vicar of Christ, left for the cure of souls. If need be Catherine will give her life to this end. She does not spare her words before the Pope on the infamies of Avignon and on the corruptions of the Curia. In three months he was on his way to Rome, and entered the Holy City in January 1377, amid a short-lived rapture of joy. Brief indeed was the satisfaction of the saint; fresh outrages by the Papal troops in Italy destroyed Roman faith, and Gregory grew weary of the plain-dealing of his relentless adviser, turning at last a deaf ear to her. His successor, Urban VI, a faithful monk but a foolish pope, provoked a schism which raised an anti-pope and split the Church into hostile camps supporting rival claims. The last days of the saint were spent in vain urgings and futile efforts to recover the unity of Christendom under Urban, 'its one true spiritual father.' With him she pleaded in vain for a mild and placable bearing to his scattered flock; with his enemies, revolting cardinals and kings, she had little success in her labours to

win back their allegiance from the French rival Pope.

Her death in Rome (April 29, 1380) was a timely deliverance, not only from the torment of lingering and cruel sickness, but from the greater anguish that would have been her portion in the dark and miserable issues of this strife within the Church.

**(e) Disenchantment and Death**

The bitterest dregs of that cup of disappointment were spared her; but she lived to know the disenchantment and the disillusionment which are more costly than the long weariness of hope deferred, the lot of her great predecessors in this attempted reformation. Yet if her most conspicuous triumph ended but in failure, its brief success and flush of dawn is the most striking of tributes to the force of her character and the predominance of her influence in an age, to all outward seeming, remote and alien from the sphere of woman's ascendancy.

**(f) Catherine and Joan of Arc**

History can never fail to be the wonder-book of the wise, nor can saintliness cease to be the hope of the world, so long as we remember that the lights which shine the brightest and the strains which sound the clearest through the flashing and clamorous fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are the divine voices and visions of two lowly women, the

saint of Siena and the maid of France[1]—both dying ere the noontide of life, yet conscious of a mission fulfilled; both shadowed in the season and circumstance of their death, but strong in faith to say 'My voices have not deceived me'; both sacrificed upon the altar of their service, but 'life-losers with their losses all made good.'

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[1] *Vide* an interesting passage on the affiliation of St. Francis, St. Catherine, and Joan of Arc in Hanotaux (*Jeanne d'Arc*, pp. 73-75).

## CHAPTER VI

### *'THE ANTE-CHAMBER OF PARADISE'*

Sienne fut exquise et ciselée comme une coupe parfaite, afin de recevoir la plus pure essence de cette vie médiévale, évaporée aujourd'hui, mais dont le parfum y demeure comme une âme légère.—GOYAU, *Vers la Joie.*

NO Italian town makes a more immediate and irresistible appeal to the eye and the heart of the traveller than Siena, throned as a queen on her hills, with the Cathedral as her noble crown, and the tower of the communal palace as a giant sceptre in her hand. Nor is the spell broken as we wander past her palaces and through her winding streets, or stand in her sloping and semicircular Campo, or gaze on her tiger-striped Duomo, with its elaborate façade and graceful cupola. The charm is strengthened if we can bring to it the perceptions of a mind sensitive to the appeal of its distinctive art and of its still more striking architecture; yet more increased if we can give to the scene the preparation of a

**Siena**

heart responsive to the many and the diverse memories of its history.

Dante—who, like his fellow-citizen Michael Angelo, has immortalized his enmities and friendships in his art—has pilloried the faults and follies of Siena in bitter and oft-remembered lines:

> Was ever race
> Light as Siena's? Sure not France herself
> Can show a tribe so frivolous and vain.

The ferment of life in this mediaeval city had as its chief elements two passions—or, as Hewlett says, 'two love affairs at once which kept them continually astir, chivalry and piety . . . blended in a way peculiar to the Sienese among Italian peoples . . . They were militant pietists and devout chevaliers.' Hence a restlessness which at one season drew upon them the scathing, if witty, answer of the Grand Duke Francis to their petition for the building of an asylum, 'Shut your city gates and you have your asylum ready-made.' In them—as often in impassioned natures—'the purest wine produced the strongest vinegar.' And no reader is likely to comprehend the tale of their city who fails to follow these clues to its tangled and complex life. Riot and rapture, bloodshed and ecstasy, are never far from each other in Sienese story; if one of these elements seems

**Chivalry and Piety**

foreign to our subject we may remind ourselves that the saintliness of an epoch always has a vital relation to its peculiar sinfulness. The luminous and the livid pages of the history serve to interpret and explain each other. Let the reader, then, set side by side with the tale of Guelf and Ghibelline strife, of family vendettas, of communal wars reflected in the Tuscan proverb, '*quando Siena piange, Firenze ride*' (when Siena mourns, Florence laughs)—a tale written in blood;—let him compare with that sanguinary page this passage, worthy of the illuminator's art. Its date is 1355, one of the most turbulent and troubled years of the city's history, and it reveals the spirit of a Sienese fraternity charged with public works.

'Since by the grace of God we are teachers to ignorant men, who know not how to read, of the miracles performed by virtue and in virtue of the Holy Faith, and the foundations of our faith are principally laid in the adoration and belief of one God in Trinity . . . of infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love and mercy; and since no undertaking, however small, can have beginning or end without these three things, the power to do, knowledge, and the true love of our work; and since in God every perfection is eminently united; now to the end that in this our calling, however unworthy it may be, we may have a good beginning and a good ending in all our words and deeds, we

will earnestly ask the aid of the divine grace, and commence by a dedication to the honour of the name, and in the name of the most Holy Trinity.'

If such was the temper of common devotion it is easy to believe that the elect souls of this city were many, and were marked by a special seal. So fruitful was the town in saints that it bore the glorious title of 'the ante-chamber of Paradise.' It was indeed, in the words that we have quoted at the head of this chapter, 'a perfect vessel fitted to receive the purest essence of this mediaeval life.' There the revival had borne its fruit, not in one swift harvest only, but in an evangelical succession of saintly lives: for though, as we have seen, the ardours of love had died down in the orders, here was always some soul as an altar or hearth to receive and conserve the holy fire. 'Saints succeeded each other then, in the city of Siena, even as the flowers follow each other from season to season in a fertile soil.'

**Succession of Saints**

Foremost of these is *St. Catherine*, the saint who lives for us still in her wonderful letters; in such sentences as, 'The intelligence feeds the affections—who knows most loves most, and he who loves most enjoys most'; or again, 'The true soul rejoices in everything, he does not make himself a judge of the servants of God,

**(a) St. Catherine**

nor of any rational creature, nay, he rejoices in every condition and every type that he sees, saying, "Thanks be to Thee, Eternal Father, that Thou hast many mansions in Thy House."'

But if she is the most famous of these denizens of the ante-chamber of Paradise, there are others not less worthy in that school of saints. Two of these we would briefly portray, late-born in time, but true children of the revival; separated by their generation but not by their spirit from the grace and glory of the morning hour.

(b) The Blessed Colombini

1. Late Conversion

*Giovanni* (or John) *Colombini* offers a striking contrast to the more illustrious members of this spiritual family in many facts of his history, notably in his late and sudden religious vocation. He was born in 1304 of an old and noble Sienese family, and for many years filled a large and prominent place in the life of the town as a prosperous cloth merchant and as a capable citizen in the high offices of civic life. His conversion was one of those sharp and sudden crises which contradict all calculation and falsify every forecast drawn from the past. Over fifty years of age, more eager and avaricious in his business than in earlier life, he found himself one day compelled to wait a few minutes for dinner when in hungry and hurried mood. He broke forth in a torrent of reproach, augmented when his wife besought him to read the book

she offered him—a series of lives of the saints. Flinging down the book, he reproached her with wasting time over such legends, to the neglect of better and more practical things. Then, in a revulsion of shame, he picked up the despised volume and in a moment or two had forgotten hunger and business and home. In vain was he called to the table; he was famished now only for God. Through the night he prayed, and with the dawn a new life had begun for him.

**2. Renunciation**

The first years after his conversion were passed in renunciation of the world and in reparation of the wrongs he had wrought; the grasping merchant became the friend of the poor, the proud citizen the humblest of penitents; he was more pitiless to himself in his austerities than he had been to the needy in his avarice. He carried the leper from the porch of the church to his own home, he abandoned his fortune, he courted the scorn of men more eagerly than once he had sought their praise. Above all he anticipated and prepared for the greater work of his fellow citizen, Bernardino, even as he followed the steps of St. Francis, by his passionate cult of the love and the name of Jesus. That holy name, dying on the lips and in the hearts of men, he willed to resuscitate, 'This name is dying, one may say it is almost extinct . . . if you go through

the world you are consumed with sadness in beholding the death of this blessed name.' So by the stones of the highway and on the steps of the palaces he spoke to his countrymen 'of sin, of eternal penalty, above all of the love of God, that burning hearth without which human loves are only feeble and flickering sparks.'

**3. Disciples**

Gradually Giovanni gathered around him a company of disciples—'the poor of Christ'—chiefly men, like himself, of good birth; some, visionaries to whom were given celestial revelations; some, poets, 'bards of Christ,' of whom it could be said more reasonably than it was spoken of the old Irish bards, 'their songs became so sweet that the angels of God leaned over the edge of heaven to hear them'; some, preachers with power to kindle the raptures of their faith and love in other souls. One of the first of these disciples was of the family of the Piccolomini, a name illustrious then in Siena by its rank, and famous afterwards in history by its Renaissance Pope, Æneas Silvius, or Pius II. No trial was too hard for these neophytes, and none was spared them by their leader; who, by tests often grotesque and always humbling, sought to remove from them, as from himself, every touch and taint of worldly pride. Scoffers and scorners among the young nobles were won to embrace the folly of the Cross; and to this company was given, first, it was said, by

the happy inspiration of a group of children, then by formal approbation of the Church, the name of Jesuates—an order being formed which endured for three hundred years.

The tale of the first generation of the Jesuates and of their founder is closely akin to that of the early friars, and reproduces the most characteristic features of that time. The same joyous asceticism, the same fervent evangelism, the same poetic ardours, the same rejoicing in nature, the same familiarity with the creatures, 'sister lark' or 'brother wolf'—the same joy in life and rapture in death, with the one name of Christ perpetually on the lips. 'Keep yourselves from sadness, give yourselves wholly to Christ, joy in Him as He joys in you. Welcome every one joyously, for I reckon that thus one wins more honour for God than by much preaching.' Colombini's letters are full of his fervent spirit and may be compared in their spiritual unction and insight with the letters of Samuel Rutherford, for the Italian preacher and the Scotch divine have a kindred freedom and fluency of tender and intimate expression. Of his preaching we have many testimonies. 'It was even as a resurrection of faith; the sinners were converted in crowds and the good became better.' He spake with authority. The peasant in the field, the lawyer in the city, at his word 'Follow me,' left his furrow, or his office, and

**4. The Jesuates**

became an apostle of Christ. 'He has, as it were, transformed the very metal of which we are made,' said the people of Castello, 'but if he had remained longer he would have changed our hearts into pure gold without alloy.' Boccaccio came under the influence of Colombini and the Jesuates, and the writer of the more famous than edifying *Decameron* is seen in his last years in the honourable rôle of commentator and expositor of Dante in Florence, and in devout seclusion and retreat at Certaldo.

It was not in vain that Colombini had heard at a crisis in his life the answer to his question, 'Is it better to withdraw from men to God, or to sow everywhere the name of Christ and harvest souls?' 'Cast far from thee the thought of solitude. Far better is it to cry aloud the name of the Lord Jesus than to fly to the depth of the desert and to defraud human kind which has need of thy help.' One further evidence of his influence is found in the fact that, though a layman, he succeeded in reforming monasteries and convents of the older orders and in breathing again into these failing institutions the inspirations of their first and best life.

He lived to see in Catherine the promise of a restoration of the noblest ideals of the Dominican rule. He anticipated by a generation the apostolate of Bernardino, one of the worthiest and truest of the sons of Francis. His death

in 1367 coincided with the approbation of his own order by the Pope, and thus with the fulfilment of his strongest desire.

*St. Bernardino* was born in 1380—the year of Catherine's death—of an illustrious Sienese family. Bereft of his parents in childhood, he was confided to the care of a group of kinsfolk, all women of singular piety and devotion. His tenderest years were marked by religious fervour and by all the signs of spiritual election. He had, in its highest sense and degree, 'that chastity of honour which felt a stain like a wound'; he blushed at an unseemly word as though he had received a blow. Withal he was endowed with natural gifts which enhanced the appeal and attraction of his spiritual qualities; gaiety of spirit and grace of face and figure, a pleasant voice and an excellent education gave to him a charm not always associated with goodness and purity. 'Nobody could possibly be bored in Bernardino's company,' said his companions—a tribute that cannot invariably be paid to the saints. He 'sparkled on the side of the angels,' and all this promise of his spiritual youth was fulfilled through the course of his apostolate. 'Possessed by the comic spirit, and yet deeply in earnest; full of religious emotion, but nevertheless a virile personality and pre-eminently rational; a saint certainly, but never-

(c) Bernardino
1. Piety and Charm

theless intensely human—this man moved whole cities by his strange, unconventional eloquence'; such is the excellent description of him by a modern historian of his city.

**2. Ministry**

One of his first public ministries was the heroic task of personal service to the plague-stricken in the pestilence of 1400, when he not only organized a band of young men for the perilous office, but also took upon himself the most distasteful and dangerous duties.

It was, however, by his preaching that the saint won lasting renown in the annals of his city and country. Nothing is more striking in the Italy of the Middle Ages than the rapid alternations of its religious history, the facile response of one generation to the call of Francis, followed by the easy relapse of the next to the old passions of 'sense at war with soul,' this again succeeded in turn by a revulsion to spiritual fervour at the call of some new herald of love and peace. Indeed the tale of these generations in some of the Italian cities and centres of revival is akin to the experience of the individual Christian in too many cases to-day—a series of pilgrimages of grace intermittent with phases and seasons of a more perilous worldliness; reversions to type which are the problem of the philosopher and the burden of the pastor. The hour when Bernardino appeared was one of those periods of backsliding too fre-

quently encountered in the history of revivals. Humanism and the dawning renascence had brought to the nation a zest of living very far removed from the 'perfect joy' of St. Francis and his companions, and Dante's 'hostelry of sorrow' was, as one writer says, converted into a fairy palace, abounding in every sensual and intellectual delight. In the streets of Siena at this time and in the audience of Bernardino was a youth whose life was almost a mirror of his age in its passionate curiosity and its eager quest for sensation of mind and heart; and no contemporary witness has left a more precious or suggestive testimony to the influence of the preacher on his hearers than Æneas Silvius Piccolomini, afterwards the humanist Pope—Pius II. It was in this atmosphere that the saint's work was wrought, and all his career is touched by the temper of this feverish age.

**3. Restoration of Preaching**

To him it was given to restore to Italy the lost prestige of popular preaching with such full measure that the early records are not content to describe his ministry without prophetic and miraculous signs to herald it. Despite the mission of Colombini and the Jesuates, Italy had lost the primacy of apostolic and evangelistic service. St. Vincent Ferrer, a Spanish Dominican, had revived the great traditions of the preaching orders, but his chief field of labour was in

France, and he had few to emulate his zeal or imitate his ministry. The glow and power of preaching had again died down in the mass of the friars, and the very fact of such manuals for pulpit preparation as we have quoted indicates that facile routine had early succeeded to free inspiration. One such collection of 'sermon helps' bore the ominous title, *Dormi Securè*, conveying the assurance to the idle that slumber might be safe since the sermon was always ready. But in Bernardino men saw again for almost thirty years (1417-1444) the prophetic type of preaching as it had been known in the primitive times of the orders.

**4. Apostolate**

He became the apostle of his country, gathering immense crowds around him in almost all the great cities of the peninsula, subduing enmities, inculcating love and peace, inflaming men with his own ardour for God, stamping the impress of his teaching, not only on the conscience and mind of his hearers, but also on the city archives, in laws inspired by him, and on the city walls in the holy symbol engraved on its buildings. For to this day can be seen in many towns, not only his portable pulpit, but also the sacred letters written over the houses of the nobles and over the halls of the communes. For Guelf and Ghibelline emblems, for state or family scutcheons, there were found after the saint had passed the graven

letters, 'I. H. S.,' encircled with rays. Thus he is represented in art, bearing the tablet with its sacred monogram and the inscription, 'I have manifested Thy name to men.' As in apostolic days at Ephesus, so in the Italian cities of the early fifteenth century, the holy fires were kindled wherein men and women cast and consumed the instruments of their vice or their vanity. At Bologna the gamblers threw on the pyre their cards and other gaming wares. One maker of dice, or of cards, complaining to Bernardino that his means of livelihood had gone, was bidden to paint the holy symbol on tablets instead, and found in this a trade at once more honourable and more lucrative than his former craft.

**5. Sermons**

No evil of his time was left unscathed by the saint in his deeply devotional but intensely practical preaching; and his influence is not less marked in its modifying of the extravagant luxury of women's fashions than in its moderating of the excessive licence of men's vices. Sanity and enthusiasm are alike conspicuous in his sermons; their highest flights of spiritual passion are never far from homely touches and familiar allusions of daily practice and of common life. His preaching is not less precious than the painting of Fra Angelico as the expression of some phases of the noble religious temper of the age, though it calls

for more imagination and a deeper sympathy to-day to understand its first fresh force of appeal when heard five centuries ago by eager but reverent crowds.

In his youth Bernardino professed himself—even as Francis for his Lady Poverty—enamoured of one who possessed all his heart, and, when pressed to speak her name, led his friends to a frescoed shrine where he knelt in ecstasy: 'This,' said he, 'is my whole love story.' It is his lasting glory that before his death in 1444 he had made that devotion the love tale of thousands of his countrymen and won through its channels the hearts of his fellows to their home in God.

## CHAPTER VII

### *AFTERMATH*

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace.

SHAKESPEARE: *Sonnets.*

**The Franciscan 'Cult'**

A DISCRIMINATING reviewer of a recent book on Assisi and its saint has expressed the opinion that 'it would now be wholesome for the Franciscan legend to find its Anatole France. Some new infusion seems to be demanded if the salt is to keep its savour.'[1] The somewhat sentimental cult of a vanished age, with its oft unthinking echo of the poet's words,

Sweet St. Francis of Assisi,
Would that he were here again,

[1] The reference is, of course, to the French critic's sceptical and, to some extent, cynical, treatment of the tale and tradition of Joan of Arc.

calls indeed for some antidote, or counter-irritant, to its uncritical eulogy and undistinguishing praise—a praise which only too often belauds the grace and glory of the past in order to belittle the presence and power of the divine to-day. The eternal problem, put afresh in every age,

> What keeps a spirit wholly true
> To that ideal which he bears?

pressed no less upon the men of the Middle Ages than upon the Apostolic Church which had lost its first love; than upon the modern Churches, striving, sometimes in vain, to catch again their 'first fine careless rapture.' After morning dew and freshness come the staleness and the mildew of the later and the sunless hours. To the student of these 'days of God's right hand,' which cast their light and radiance across the centuries of history, no lines will come more readily and unbidden to mind than the poetic lament with which we head this closing chapter. Already our readers will have caught, scattered over the earlier pages, the omens of decay, the symptoms of arrested fervour or of perverted desire. Wyclif's contemptuous scorn of the friars as 'able-bodied beggars'; Dante's repeated reproaches; Chaucer's unflattering portrait:

> A Frere ther was, a wantoun and a merye
> . . . . . .

> He knew wel the tavernes in every town,
> And every ostiller or gay tapstere.

Erasmus's mordant satire; the pages of Jusserand's *English Wayfaring Life*; the merciless records and revelations of contemporary chronicles;—all these only tell us—what we are surely prepared to know—that the mediaeval revival had its full share of those faults of practice, fallibilities of judgement, follies of belief, and failures of ideal which are apt to attach themselves to every noble dream in its passage into deed and through history. For good or for ill, the likeness between Methodism and Franciscanism has passed into the common stock of historic allusions, and threatens indeed to be a King Charles's head to every teller of the Franciscan tale. It is a tempting, if oft-times specious, parallel for every ecclesiastical Plutarch; it may therefore, following the custom, be well to remind ourselves that Francis and Wesley, Giles the Ecstatic and John Nelson, Bonaventura and Thomas Walsh — these finer spirits, touched only to fine issues,—are never the sole factors or the exclusive types of the history to which they lend an air of romance.

**Haloed History**

We have made, as was inevitable, many references to the haloed history, the golden legend, of the early days of the order: the *Fioretti*, the *Mirror of Perfection*, the *Legend of the Three Companions*, the *Lives* by

Celano, the *Sacrum Commercium*. It is quite as imperative, though less attractive, to complete and balance the picture by a document of a different order, no less a 'mirror' of the time, albeit its reflections and images are of a more chequered type.

Salimbene's *Chronicle*, edited in Coulton's *From Francis to Dante*, offers us the antidote for which, like the reviewer, we have sighed —especially in reading the advocacy which whitewashes the ancient friars only in order to blacken the modern reformers and revivalists.

**Critical Antidotes: Salimbene**

We are conscious, indeed, of a partisan tone in the editor's use of his abundant material: his appreciation is almost too eager, his delight too keen, in all that can prove his case against the eulogists of the friars; but unless his critics can meet more fairly his evidence than their many articles have yet done, his case is substantially proved. Scattered over many reviews, Mr. Coulton's indictment comes to a head in the chronicle of this thirteenth-century friar, born in the life-time of St. Francis, and familiar with the first of his disciples. We do not love the saint himself the less for Salimbene's testimony to him; but we learn that even then, and yet more in the generation that followed, there was much we need not sigh to see again, and some things indeed over which we sigh as we do in fact

meet them again, for these pages tell us once more that 'there is nothing new under the sun.' The Chronicler shows, in his Editor's words, that 'the very strictness of the rule in theory hardened the average friar's heart against its liberal observance in practice; a limited number of men were precisians by profession, and the majority felt all the more dispensed from imitating them, as the crowds of our great towns claim a sort of vicarious merit in the achievements of their professional football players.' Salimbene himself is one of the men who find it pleasanter to pay the gate-money than to play the game; but he watched the play to some purpose, and most of all in its full-flavoured episodes. He is a 'gossip of genius'—a Boswell to his age, as he has been called, with more than a streak of Pepys; and the result is one of the raciest and most richly-coloured of mediaeval autobiographies. More akin in some of his moods to the 'friar of orders grey' of a modern song than to the saint of the mediaeval story, he has written many pages which excite a smile and more which evoke a sigh.

There are some minor 'scandals' of a quite modern savour: boy preachers, e.g., who are exploited by astute elders and followed by gaping crowds: there is even a sorrowful lament over the admission of 'laymen to Conference,' which might have done duty for a

conservative Methodist of our own generation; and there are complaints of 'permanent officials' which would satisfy a radical reformer, jealous for the 'floor of the House.' Here, as in other matters, the chronicler is looking back with longing to the 'good old times,' for, in Coulton's words, 'The friars differed from the older orders in their frequent change and re-election of officials, a system in which we find one of the many strong points of similarity between the revival of the thirteenth century and the Wesleyan revival.' Happily the fall of Elias indicates to Salimbene that this last evil is averted and the friars delivered from peril of 'the men who have no changes and who fear not God'—or man. Not so with the contrary peril of the lay invasion, which has taken deeper root and spread far afield. No doubt the prejudice of the reporter counts for much in the tale he tells us and in the text with which he concludes his plaint, 'I myself saw in a general chapter held at Sens a full three hundred brethren, among whom the laymen were in the greater number, yet they did nought but eat and sleep. And when I dwelt in the province of Tuscany . . . the lay brethren were not only equal in number to the clerics, but even exceeded them by four. Ah God! Elias, thou hast multiplied the nation and not increased the joy.'

**Minor Woes**

Thomas of Eccleston again, writing in the same generation, has laments which sound no less the echo of some modern plaints: 'I did not become a friar for the purpose of erecting walls,' says one soul, much afflicted with chapel-building cares. And Brother William of Abingdon, 'before he built the house at Gloucester, had an incomparable gift of preaching, and such a preacher as he, and one so gracious in speech, ought never to have been occupied with buildings.' For the anxieties of 'questing' so degraded him as to cause the King of England once to exclaim, 'Brother William, there was a time when thou could'st speak of spiritual things; now all that thou canst say is, Give, Give, Give!'

Some indeed of these woes, which reach us from the confessions or warnings of religious mediaeval writers, are indicative rather of the narrowness and artificiality of cloister life than of grave degeneracy in its inmates. When we find the holy women of these retreats cautioned against the dangers of desiring to see fair things and to possess rare things—we are conscious chiefly of the truth of the saying, 'Drive out nature with a fork, she comes running back again.'

But other evils, fatal to the ideal of the founders, more perilous to its purity and virtue than these minor deviations from the primitive rule, entered quickly into the orders, and cor-

roded or corrupted their spirituality and sacred influence. 'The contagion of the world's slow stain' appears in the twin sins of the love of power and the pride of display. It is here, even more than in the invasion of sensual and grosser sins, that we are conscious of the fall from Dominic and Francis to their first successors, most of all from 'the little poor man of Assisi' to men of the temper of Elias of Cortona. Possibly, as we have already hinted, it is not wholly to Elias and like-minded brethren—ecclesiastics ambitious for their order, shrewd or subtle men who knew man's grasp as well as his reach—that the change and decline are due. As has been said, the rigid poverty enjoined by the saint was simply a religious 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' 'magnificent—but not war'; it belongs to the order of things which are solitary peaks rather than habitable tablelands of Christian life, serving only to tempt the less sure-footed to a greater fall. It is questionable if Francis ever knew the 'average man' as Wesley did; and if alloy must enter into the fine gold before its common currency and use, it is better that the finder of the gold should also fix the standard for circulation than leave it to another and less worthy hand. It is perilous to quote a parallel in secular for sacred history; but the mediaeval Church, like the modern State of Italy, had its

**Perilous Changes**

statesmen as well as its seers, its diplomats and its dreamers, its Cavours as its Mazzinis; and the dreamers 'dreaming greatly' have sometimes left a legacy too plastic and pliable to other ends than their own. That which has been a spirit and ideal in the heart of a saint becomes a system and scheme in the hands of an ecclesiastic, and ultimately the schemers conquer the spirituals.

It is probable that both the passive part of Francis in the hours of change and his protests against some features of the change have been exaggerated by Sabatier and other historians —too anxious to make of the saint a mediaeval Protestant and dissenter;[1] but it is certain that the order took a direction and found a development other than he had willed.

**St. Francis and Elias**

And the sign of that departure is the noble church which crests the hill of Assisi, where Elias buried with the body of the saint much of the spirit of his dream. 'Good things of day began to droop and drowse' in the hour when for the poor huts or lowly cells of the Portiuncula, where he had lived and died, there rose up,

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[1] There seems some little ground for an Italian writer's complaint of Sabatier as desiring to rob Roman Catholicism of the honour of its saint—'lo scopo del Sabatier, che è quello di voler sottrare al cattolicismo la gloria e il vantaggio di aver dato al mondo S. Francesco d'Assisi.'

tier by tier, this lofty Gothic temple where the memory of Francis would greet the eyes, as it already filled the heart, of every pilgrim to Assisi and its shrines. If indeed the theory be true that art is but a sunset glory of the great days of history, the dying in beauty of what has once lived in power, then—in the very splendours of the Dominican and the Franciscan churches, in their once glowing and now fading frescoes, in the homage and tribute paid by painters and poets to the preachers of poverty and humility—we shall see the measure of the change that has passed over the friars from the simplicity and spirituality of the primitive age, and the distance travelled from the day when Francis spoke to Leo by the way, 'setting forth to him what things were perfect joy.'

**The Warning of History**

The lesson is one that may be wisely remembered in an hour when not only modern States but Churches also are asserting loudly their claim to a place in the sun; when no Old Testament prophecy and no New Testament promise seem so forgotten as are the forecast of One who should not strive nor cry, and the beatitude pronounced on the meek. It is still better to pray than to push, better to proclaim Christ's place in the universe than to demonstrate our own. These are old and trite lessons, but they speak anew to us from the

tale of Mediaeval Methodism, and may have value for our later days, if it yet be true that

> A happy wight is he that by mishaps
> Of others doth beware of afterclaps.

But there is also a more positive and more pleasant lesson with which we prefer to close our sketch of the mediaeval revival. In the thirteenth century, as in the eighteenth, in Francis and his true disciples, as in Wesley and the early Methodist preachers, the evangelical experience and the evangelistic expression of God's grace to men were the fruitful seed from which the spiritual harvest of many generations was reaped. Alike in the substance and in the spirit of their testimony the evangelists of that earlier day were the precursors of our own eighteenth-century revival; their value and their virtue are not lost as teachers to our later day. St. Bonaventura was found by the messengers who brought him the offer of a cardinal's hat washing the meanest vessels of the monastery. When asked the source of his astonishing knowledge he pointed in silence to the crucifix. In Christ and in His Cross were hid for these mediaeval preachers 'all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge,' and it was out of such store that,

**Mediaeval and Modern Methodism**

**(a) Experience and Expression of Grace**

being poor, they made many rich; having nothing, they yet possessed all things. Because their study—a hut of reeds, or cell of clay—was an oratory, their wayside pulpit was a throne, from which Christ swayed the hearts and ruled the lives of men.

**(b) The Perfect Joy**

And in that fellowship with their Lord they learned also their secret of abounding joy—that perfect joy which, as we have seen, is the radiant temper of all their testimony to their age, as marked in them as in their eighteenth-century successors, who sang with an exultant faith, through scorning and shame, in poverty and persecution:

> On all the kings of earth
> With pity we look down,
> And claim, in virtue of our birth,
> A never-fading crown.

It has been said that Dibdin's sea-songs won more men for his Majesty's navy than all the press-gangs of our English towns, and served moreover to bring men back from mutiny to disciplined contentment and peace. The evangelism of spiritual constraint has its high use and service in the kingdom of Christ; the panaceas of legislation have their value for the healing of social distress; but the spell of spiritual gladness will evoke a wider and deeper response of hearts to the call of God, and will win a more lasting peace among men. It was

this note—caught by Wesley first amongst the Moravians as a new language, and sounded by him in the fuller and the richer music of the Methodist revival—which touched and changed the England of the eighteenth century; it was this same note which, on the lips of Francis, won to the life of grace and the love of peace the Italy of the thirteenth century; it is this same note by which the world of our own day waits to be wooed and won for God. We are learned, more than our fathers, in all the methods of scientific culture—even of souls; yet we mourn our barrenness and confess our failure in many and varied forms of speech. The story of the mediaeval revival may tell us, amongst its many lessons, that not by the changed culture, but by the changed climate, shall we see fulfilled the words in which year by year the sons of Wesley have renewed their vows and revived their hopes, 'until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.'

# APPENDIX

## SOURCES AND STUDIES OF FRANCISCAN HISTORY

### Critical Bibliography.

Prof. Little: The Sources of the History of St. Francis of Assisi. *Eng. Historical Review*, Oct. 1902.

Anon: Franciscan Literature. *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1904.

Dr. Butler: Article on St. Francis. *Ency. Brit.*, 1911 edition.

Dr. Workman: Evolution of the Monastic Ideal—see Chap. VI.

Sabatier: Life of St. Francis. (Pp. 347-448).

Sabatier: Preface to *Speculum Perfectionis* (in Collection d'études et de documents sur l'histoire religieuse et littéraire du moyen-âge, vol. i.: Fischbacher, Paris).

Joergensen: Saint François d'Assise (pp. xv.-cii.).

### Works in English.

(Chiefly translations. Of the original studies in English, Knox-Little and Mrs. Oliphant are as useful as any).

Sabatier: Life of St. Francis (Hodder & Stoughton) the one indispensable book.

Jörgensen: St. Francis of Assisi (trans. by Dr. Sloane, pub. by Longmans).

Father Cuthbert: Life of St. Francis of Assisi (Longmans),

Pre-eminent in value are the *Franciscan Classics*—the early literature of the movement—many of which are translated in Dent's excellent series. The chief are:

(1) The Little Flowers of St. Francis.
(2) The Legend of the Three Companions.
(3) The Converse of St. Francis and his sons with Holy Poverty (highly praised by M. Sabatier).
(4) The Legend of St. Bonaventura.
(5) The Mirror of Perfection (trans. by Dr. Evans, pub. by Nutt).
(6) The Lives of St. Francis, by Thomas of Celano (trans. by Howell, pub. by Methuen & Co.).

*For the Generation after St. Francis.*

From St. Francis to Dante—Salimbene's chronicle (edited by Coulton: Nutt).

Sons of Francis. Miss Macdonell. (Dent & Co.).

The Friars and how they came to England (trans. of Thomas of Eccleston's chronicle, by Father Cuthbert: Sands & Co.).

Franciscan Essays (by Gardner, Little, &c.; pub. by Brit. Soc. of Franciscan Studies).

Short studies by Jessop, Creighton, Hewlett, &c., present in brief form interesting phases of the work of the Friars.

WORKS IN FRENCH.

*Gebhart* (see reference in Introduction): 'L'Italie Mystique' and 'Les Origines de la Renaissance en Italie.'

*Lafenestre*: 'St. François d'Assise et Savonarole—Inspirateurs de l'art Italien.'

*Henry Thode* (trans. from German): 'St François et les origines de l'art de la Renaissance en Italie.'

*Pere Ubald d'Alencon*: 'Les opuscules de St. François d'Assise.'

*Lempp*: 'Elie de Cortone.'

ITALIAN sources used are indicated in the Introduction: for GERMAN works the student is referred to the critical and extended bibliographies named above.

The reader who is anxious to follow up the study of Franciscan history to its sources will find his first difficulty in the mass of material, both primary and derivative. Chevalier's *Répertoire des sources historiques du moyen-âge* fills eleven closely printed columns with an unclassified catalogue of books and articles on St. Francis, and the more critical lists appended to several recent studies are lavish even of their sifted wealth. Joergensen's introduction to his life of the Saint devotes, in the French edition, over eighty pages to the question of the sources; and here, and in Sabatier, the student may discern ample evidence alike of the abounding literature and of its still contested and comparative value. Briefer discussions, if not clearer conclusions, will be found in Professor Little's learned article in the *English Historical Review*, October, 1902, and in a useful summary in the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1904. The latest though not final phase of the question is presented in Dom Butler's bibliography appended to his article St. Francis in the *Ency. Brit.* (1911 edition). The relation of the early documents to each other, and their comparative worth, are subjects of a contention scarcely less animated or perplexing than the Synoptic problem in New Testament criticism. Sabatier holds that the *Speculum Perfectionis* is our earliest document, dating 1227 and written by Leo: that the *Legend of the Three Companions* was written by Leo and two other companions of Francis in 1246; and that the *Lives* by Thomas of Celano are 'tendency' or partisan documents, written in the interests of the relaxed portion of the Order. Other scholars, Prof. Goetz, Pere van Ortroy, Friar Lemmens, answer that the *Spec. Perf.* is a fourteenth-century compilation, much of it forged, with some uncertain elements from Brother Leo; that the *Legend of the Three Companions* is also a forgery; and that Celano's biography is our best source—containing much that is due to Leo and other companions.

Whatever be the critical issue of this scholarly strife, it is not likely that Sabatier's picture, by which chiefly St. Francis has been made known to us, will be modified in any

essential feature, nor will his long and learned labours on the *Spec. Perf.* lose value as a mediæval witness to, and estimate of, the Saint. An English translation has been given us (by Dr. Evans: David Nutt); but Sabatier's preface, imperative for the student, is to be read only in the French original (*Collection d'études et de documents sur l'histoire religieuse et littéraire du moyen-âge*, vol. i.: Fischbacher, 1901). It is difficult to resist his conclusion, whatever be the final source of this early book, that the legend here 'resembles those letters written in seasons of sorrow to recount to the absent the end of those who have just departed, without whom we cannot believe it possible to live. There is not perhaps a single document of the Middle Ages where one feels such an intensity of emotion.'

I have already referred, in the Introduction, to the principal books which have served me in the course of my work; it is sufficient here to indicate their relative value and to add notes on a few other books from the always increasing Franciscan store.

In **English** we have still no work to rival Sabatier's study; but readers of Joergensen's delightful *Pilgrim Walks in Franciscan Italy* will welcome his *St. Francis of Assisi*, which is now published in an English translation. Another Roman Catholic biography has also appeared in the last few months from the pen of Father Cuthbert (the translator and editor of Thomas of Eccleston's *De Adventu F. F. Minorum in Angliam*). A collection of *Franciscan Essays* (by Sabatier, E. G. Gardner, Prof. Little, and others), published by the British Society of Franciscan Studies, can be heartily commended for its brief, but excellent, presentation of several phases of Minorite history.

It is, however, in the earlier Franciscan classics, many of them given us in excellent English versions published by Dent, that the true spirit and savour of the story survives. The halo of legend has not hidden or travestied the sober truth of the tale, and here and there indeed offers us the best light upon its pages. It is in the *Little Flowers* (a compara-

tively late compilation), the *Mirror of Perfection*, the *Legend of the Three Companions*, the *Converse of St. Francis and his sons with Holy Poverty*, that the Umbrian scene and the spiritual climate envelop us as we read, and many may say with François Coppée: 'I hardly know St. Francis except by the *Fioretti* . . . and never was there gathered in the garden of legend a bouquet of flowers more exquisite, or exhaling a sweeter odour of sanctity.' Of the *Converse of St. Francis and his sons with Holy Poverty*, M. Sabatier says: 'Those who lack time and can devote only brief moments to Franciscan matters would do well to read and re-read the *Sacrum Commercium*. There they will find St. Francis fully, there will they recover again all the inspiration of the inner reform of the Church for which sigh still the best minds of our age.'

Bonaventura's *Legend of St. Francis* is also translated in the same series; the trend of modern criticism is opposed to Sabatier's somewhat disparaging estimate of this work as an official and artificial compilation.

Thomas of Celano's *Lives of St. Francis* (translated by Howell: Methuen & Co.) is indispensable, and whatever be the findings on its supposed 'tendencies' it will remain one of our best sources for knowledge of the saint.

For the generation after Francis the recent edition of *Salimbene's Chronicle* in Coulton's *From St. Francis to Dante* is valuable, despite the somewhat partisan tone of its editor, a counterpoise to over-sentimental praise of the Friars. Miss Macdonell's *Sons of Francis* is a happily conceived and pleasantly written series of sketches of typical Franciscans, the more valuable for its bibliographies, by which a careful reader may test and check some of her conclusions.

In **French** Renan and Ozanam have anticipated Sabatier in appreciation of the saint and in the literary charm of presentation of the essential traits of his spirit and service. We have no translation of Ozanam's *Les poëtes franciscains en Italie au 13me Siècle*, and no substitute for it in English. The same is to be said of Gebhart's *L'Italie Mystique* (see

reference in Introduction). His *Les Origines de la Renaissance en Italie* deals with a later age, but casts much light back on the period and on the influence of St. Francis.

For Elias, and the controversy of which he became the storm-centre after the death of Francis, Lempp's *Elie de Cortone* is the one great work. Special aspects of Franciscan influence are dealt with in Lafenestre's *St. François d'Assise et Savonarole—Inspirateurs de l'art Italien,* and Henry Thode's *St. François d'Assise et les Origines de l'art de la Renaissance en Italie* (pub. Berlin, 1885; Fr. translation, Paris, 1909).

I have made continuous reference—for the writings of St. Francis—to a little volume in the Nouvelle Bibliotheque Franciscaine, *Les Opuscules de St. François d'Assise,* edited and translated (with critical notes) by Pere Ubald d'Alençon.

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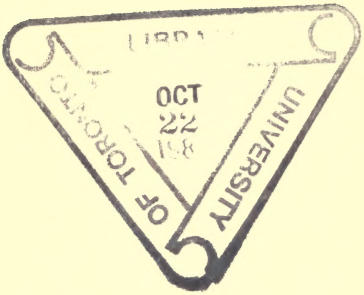
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